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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1999

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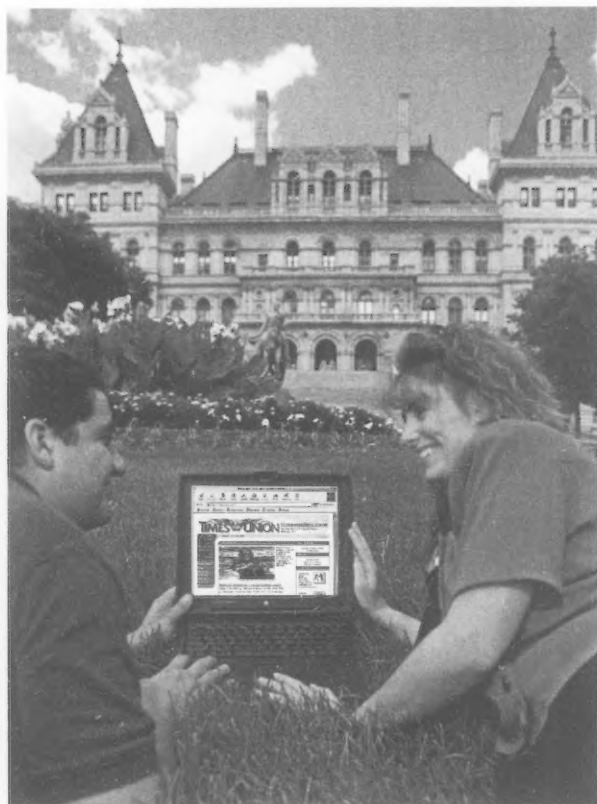
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HEARST: WHERE JOURNALISM OF DISTINCTION IS AN EVERYDAY STORY



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This year, the Digital Edge Award for the best American online newspaper in its circulation class went to timesunion.com in Albany, New York. In the highly competitive category of Web-based newspapers, timesunion.com was cited by the judges for its "superior design, in-depth content and focus on interactivity and community."

The Times Union's Web site is attracting not only the attention of judges at the Newspaper Association of America's awards show, but also the loyalty of readers in its hometown and surrounding area. According to recent research conducted for Editor & Publisher magazine, the average timesunion.com customer visited the site 25 times per month and spent close to 3 hours per week on the site. Readers keep coming back to timesunion.com because it's an easy site to navigate. As a Web-based newspaper, it also gives people the opportunity to interact with the content and with their community.

Recognition for its outstanding Web site marks the second significant achievement for the Times Union in a year. Recently, the Newspaper of Distinction Award for the best newspaper in its circulation class was presented to the Times Union by the New York State Associated Press Association. This commitment to provide excellence in journalism on any platform is one more way Hearst Newspapers enrich readers' lives every day.

Visit the award-winning Times Union Web site at [www.timesunion.com](http://www.timesunion.com)



## Announces

# THE KAISER/NATIONAL PRESS FOUNDATION MEDIA MINI-FELLOWSHIPS IN HEALTH FOR 1999

### *Travel and Research Grants for Print or Broadcast Journalists and Editors Interested in Health Policy and Public Health*

In 1999 the Kaiser Media Fellowships Program, in conjunction with the National Press Foundation, will again award up to fifteen mini-fellowships to print, television, and radio journalists to research and report on a health policy, health financing, or public health issue of their choice. The purpose is to encourage in-depth reporting on public health and health policy issues, by providing journalist with travel and research support to complete a specific project for publication or broadcast. Typically, grants are \$5,000 each (up to \$10,000 for broadcast projects).

Priority is given to projects otherwise unlikely to be undertaken or completed, focusing on issues that have not been covered or are under-reported, and which have a high likelihood of being published/aired and of reaching a mass audience. Applicants must submit a brief outline of their work; and letters of support from a supervising editor. **Applications need to be submitted by October 15, 1999.**

For more information, or to apply for the 1999 awards, see our web site at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org) or write to:

Penny Duckham  
Executive Director of the Kaiser Media Fellowships Program  
Kaiser Family Foundation  
2400 Sand Hill Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
E-mail: [pduckham@kff.org](mailto:pduckham@kff.org)

### *Ten journalists were awarded Kaiser/National Press Foundation Media Mini-Fellowships in 1998/99, to research and report on the following issues:*

- Lori Bergen**, public television producer, *Kansas Public Television*  
Access to health care in rural communities in Kansas
- Bill Lichtenstein**, producer, *The Infinite Mind* public radio series, New York City  
Caring for the mentally ill in the community: what happens when a state mental hospital closes
- Andy Miller**, health/business reporter, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*  
Enrollment in Medicare and Medicaid HMOs: a comparative look at the experiences of patients and providers in different states
- Duncan Moore**, reporter, *Modern Healthcare*  
The decline of the staff-model HMO: why did this model of delivering care fail?
- Ann Pappert**, freelance health and medical journalist, New York City  
Insurance access and coverage problems, and the impact on the healthcare women receive
- Mary Beth Pfeiffer**, projects editor, *The Poughkeepsie Journal*  
Efforts to prevent the high incidence of car accidents involving teen drivers
- Mario Rossilli**, reporter, *The Sun-Sentinel*, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
New HIV/Aids drugs and their impact on treatment, access and financing issues
- Terri Russell**, medical reporter, *KOLO-8 Television/Reno*, Nevada  
Legalizing the medical usage of marijuana
- Eric Schoch**, science and technology writer, *The Indianapolis Star and News*  
The impact of genomics and genetic testing on the quality and availability of health care and public health in the U.S.
- Eric Whitney**, associate producer, *High Plains News Service*, Montana  
The understanding and treatment of mental illness, focused on the rural West

The Kaiser Family Foundation, which funds the Media Mini-Fellowships Program, is an independent health care foundation and is not affiliated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. The National Press Foundation, which helps administer the program and select the recipients, is a non-partisan, tax-exempt organization devoted to fostering excellence in journalism. It is based in Washington, DC.

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On the race beat: Jonathan Kaufman with the girl he wrote about,  
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WOCHEIE KIMATA/THE SEATTLE TIMES

### Reporting Race

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Race and diversity stories supposedly make people's eyes  
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have found ways to make those reports fresh and compelling.  
This special package tells about just such work.

*by Mike Hoyt,*

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*by S. Austin Merrill*



"TO ASSESS THE PERFORMANCE OF JOURNALISM . . . TO HELP STIMULATE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT IN THE PROFESSION, AND TO SPEAK OUT FOR WHAT IS RIGHT, FAIR, AND DECENT"

*From the founding editorial, 1961*



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MOHEIT CECI

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*by Peter Overby*

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LOGO ART/ROB HARBELL

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*by H.D.S. Greenway*

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# Civic Journalism is ...

About making ordinary concerns compelling.

**A** lawyer friend of mine recently told me why he doesn't read newspapers anymore. He said journalists always focus on conflict and seek out people who have extreme points of view. He thinks we leave out the people in the middle because "they're boring."

Experience tells me he's right. Journalists do shy away from people who aren't clear in their convictions, who don't deliver powerful quotes.

Yet most people find themselves somewhere in the middle on issues. Before making up their minds, they like to hear what thoughtful, diverse people have to say – people the newspaper can introduce them to.

For me, civic journalism is about enlarging the range of voices on stories, bringing to the surface the values behind peoples' opinions, helping citizens see possible common ground and giving information on how, if they choose, they can play a role in shaping solutions.

Our challenge is to do so in engaging, compelling ways. Like *The Enquirer's* "Dear Mr. President" package. When Clinton came to Cincinnati four days after Ken Starr released his report on the president's relationship with Monica Lewinsky, we invited readers to send us the questions they would ask Clinton if they had the chance. Surprisingly, many of the 1,500 readers who responded didn't mention sex. They talked about China, unemployment and the environment.

Then again, a lot of them talked about sex – and their thoughts on the presidency and what should happen next.

Boring? Ha!



**Rosemary Goudreau**  
Managing Editor  
Cincinnati Enquirer

---

***The Pew Center for Civic Journalism is pleased to present this message, another in a series on how journalists are working to improve news coverage by involving citizens -- and to improve the community through their journalism. For more information, call 202-331-3200.***



**Pew Center for Civic Journalism**

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# letters

## HITTING A NERVE

"Burnout!" (CJR, July/August) couldn't be any more accurate. Finally — an article that speaks from the trenches about a business that needs to pull itself out of a fatal tailspin. Thanks for publishing such an insightful perspective — this is so long overdue!

DAVID ASHBROCK  
Production manager  
WXIX-TV  
Cincinnati, Ohio

I almost lost my breakfast when I read this passage in Joanmarie Kalter's piece on journalist burnout: "Another (reporter), who had children, switched from hard news to education, a beat that reflected her own changing interests." Perhaps Kalter's next assignment for CJR should be an examination of the education beat.

MIKE BOWLER  
Education editor, *The Sun*  
Baltimore, Maryland

## CROPPED OUT

I can only assume from your July/August article on journalists' pay that you don't consider photographers as journalists. I (and I'm sure I speak for many of my fellow photographers) am insulted that you would exclude us from the story. The old cliché still has great validity: "A picture is worth a 1,000 words."

DANIEL HULSHIZER  
Dayton, New Jersey

## A DIFFERENT VOICE

In "A Babel of Broadcasts," (CJR, July/August), Mark Hopkins would have us believe that U.S. surrogate broadcasters like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty would dispense with journalistic responsibility to force a prescribed goal — to incite Serbian soldiers to desert, say — but this is not the case.

VOA broadcasts a balanced line-up of regional and international news. It aired statements by the president and secre-

tary of state to the Serbs and ethnic Albanians. It covered daily press briefings at the White House, Pentagon, and State Department. It also consistently sought reactions from official Serbian sources. And in an extraordinary public service effort, worthy of the finest traditions of American journalism, VOA's Albanian service created a family reunification program.

The combined success of VOA and RFE/RL belies Hopkins's claim that U.S. international broadcasting has shown "so few proven results." Our services were number one among foreign broadcasters in Serbia and the Kosovar refugee camps. We affected events on the ground. By providing accurate and objective news and information, we advanced the goals of the United States and NATO. Gaining an audience and making an impact while upholding our journalistic integrity — what media organization would not be thrilled with these results?

MARC B. NATHANSON  
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Governor  
Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Washington, D.C.

## OBJECTIVITY AND JOE

In "A Raucous Century of Covering Politics," (CJR, July/August), James Boylan states correctly that the three wire services — "handcuffed by their own objectivity" — had distributed Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy's charges or innuendos about Communist ties or sympathies by certain Democrats, diplomats, or bureaucrats without ascertaining the truth of the charges. (I disagree with the argument that they did that because of devotion to objectivity; the wire services were fiercely competitive, and they could not afford to take time to try to check the accuracy of McCarthy's charges. And what a senator says is news, even today.)

Some newspapers happily published



## COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

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TOM GOLDSTEIN  
DEAN

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the charges as reported by the wire services, or expanded them. But others did not; they tried to determine the truth or to obtain a rebuttal by the victim, and they often held back the stories until they could get an answer. And a good many newspapers — a minority, to be sure — challenged McCarthy and his accusations early and late, both in news stories and editorials. The earliest opposition, outside of Wisconsin (where the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Madison Capital Times* were unrelenting), came from *The Washington Post*, the *New York Post*, and the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, but by 1952, eight of the ten newspapers named that year in the Bernays poll as the best in the nation had become critical of the senator and his campaign.

At the national level, I agree with Boylan that the opposition of *Time* magazine was important, and the Army-McCarthy hearings had a major impact on McCarthy's career, but the Murrow program in 1954 was so late in the game that its effect was negligible. Murrow said as much.

EDWIN R. BAYLEY  
Author of *Joe McCarthy and the Press*  
Carmel, California

In his review of twentieth century Washington reporting, James Boylan recalls, correctly, the breast-beating the press engaged in after the downfall of Joe McCarthy, with reporters and editors lamenting that they had been "too willingly purveying the senator's wild accusations." Never again would they permit themselves to be used in such a manner, they all said.

But at least they had objectivity as a defense for quoting McCarthy. Throughout the Monica soap opera we read mostly what "sources [unnamed] said." And most of what the sources said turned out to be untrue or at best half-true.

WILLIAM H.A. CARR  
Indianapolis, Indiana

## NO EXCUSES, PLEASE

I'm concerned about Neil Hickey's use of the word "creep," twice, in relation to mistakes in the media in his report, "Handling Corrections," (CJR, July/August). Mistakes never "creep." They are the result of lazy, stupid, ignorant, or, occasionally, biased, reckless, or malicious reporting and editing. They are avoided when a reporter, editor, or headline writer mentally fact-

checks his or her work as he or she goes along. "How do I know that fact?" "Who said that?" "What was the source?" "Is there corroboration?" "Was that an objective fact or the personal opinion of someone with a definite ax to grind?" "Did the story actually say that? (for headlines)."

The *Miami Herald's* practice of correcting their morgue should be followed everywhere. Otherwise, the librarian is perpetuating a pervasive problem. One final point: I was not reassured, as Hickey was, by the 57 percent of journalists who never suspected a colleague of manufacturing a quote or an incident. Such naiveté is pervasive and pernicious. I see that 57 percent statistic as an index of the degrees to which our colleagues are gulled into a false sense of security.

ROBERT E. KROLL  
Oakland attorney and former *Legal Affairs* writer, *Orange County Register*  
Berkeley, California

## CLARIFICATION

In a chart accompanying the story on rising pay for journalists in the July/August issue, CJR included a sampling of journalists' salaries, without the names. But since there is only one newspaper managing editor in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the pledge of anonymity was effectively broken, which CJR regrets. In addition, the editor says the salary figure is not accurate.

## COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

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WE LOVE TECHNOLOGY. It's new and it's shiny and it inspires a certain awe, like the Great Pyramid of Cheops or a tiny new human being. Technology is good at the heavy lifting. People are good at the heavy thinking. Bits and bytes and ones and zeroes fly around the planet, but only at our discretion. The computer has a role model, and it is us. Computers are plastic and metal and sand. People are brilliance and discernment and vision. Admire machines. Worship their inventors.

HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT



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# CJRupfront

## MEDICAL REPORTING

### NEW DRUGS: A DOSE OF REALITY

*The Press Too Often Plays Up the Positive*

Late last year NBC began trumpeting the virtues of a new "superaspirin," the drug Celebrex, which is jointly marketed by G.D. Searle and Pfizer Inc. and would soon become the fastest-selling new drug ever. On December 1, the *Nightly News* reported that a Food and Drug Administration arthritis advisory panel that reviewed the drug had recommended FDA approval. The segment featured Dr. Joseph Markenson, identified as "with the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York," saying that Celebrex, the first of a new class of pain-relief drugs, would "revolutionize the industry because it's a whole new group of drugs that are going to be safe."

The next day on the *Today* show Dr. Steven Abramson, the physician who headed the advisory panel, downplayed the drug's potential side effects. "There may be some ulcers," he said, "though it's much less than the other drugs" that Celebrex was being compared with, the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents (NSAIDs), such as aspirin and ibuprofen.

In January, after the FDA approved Celebrex, *Dateline NBC* brought back Markenson, saying he had closely monitored one of the patients featured on the show through the drug trials. While *Dateline* noted that the FDA "has insist-



NBC quoted Dr. Markenson on Celebrex without noting his link to the its maker

ed" on a warning label, it then featured Markenson giving a reassuring message.

Finally in February, *Nightly News* revisited Celebrex, with Tom Brokaw declaring that in clinical trials Celebrex "has proved to be very effective at treating the pain without any side effects."

NBC's stories were fairly typical of the reporting on Celebrex: the press tended to highlight the positive findings, often failed to report that there were unknowns, and slid past potential negatives. And sometimes, it did not disclose that its sources had financial ties to the drug company. For example, NBC failed to report that Markenson had helped test the drug as a clinical investigator for Searle. A Searle spokesman conceded that it is "standard industry prac-

tice to compensate physicians for time spent," but would not say how much. Markenson said money went to the hospital. "The contract was between me, Searle, and the hospital," he said. "The money pays for the time involved, nurses, physicians, special equipment needed. It's not all profit to the university or the investigator, but there is some profit or nobody would be doing it."

Journalists could have asked harder questions about the long-term effects of Celebrex. For example, a University of Pennsylvania study published in January in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* discussed a possible risk of blood clotting, which can result in heart attacks and strokes. The study, which recommended larger clinical trials, was funded by Searle, though not mentioned in company press releases about Celebrex. (Searle says the study reached "highly specula-

tive conclusions," though Dr. G. A. FitzGerald, its senior author, says it raised "a flag that people hadn't thought about before.") NBC did briefly mention potential cardiovascular risks on its January show, but not on its February show. A Nexis search turns up only scattered mentions of the study, most of them on local TV.

*The Wall Street Journal* did some digging of its own. Using the results of a Freedom of Information Act request, the *Journal* reported April 20 that Celebrex had been linked to ten deaths and eleven cases of gastrointestinal hemorrhages during its first three months on the market. (The FDA responded that the product did not pose "some special risk" at this time. Searle said the drug was "performing as expected.")

Still, there were red flags on Celebrex that might have led to more balanced stories about it. For example:

■ The FDA approved the drug only for rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, not for acute pain, as the drugmakers had also wanted because, according to the FDA, there wasn't enough evidence to show it was effective for that use.

■ Despite the company's wish to avoid a warning label, the FDA required essentially the same label it requires for all NSAID products, noting the potential for gastrointestinal bleeding.

■ When the FDA approved the drug, it noted that "additional studies in many thousands of patients would be needed to see whether Celebrex actually causes fewer serious gastrointestinal complications than other NSAID products."

As Scott-Levin, a consulting firm, points out in its publication, *Pharmaceutical Quarterly*, Celebrex got a "lukewarm FDA endorsement." Yet with some help from the press, its sales have surpassed even Viagra, bringing in some \$600 million in its first six months.

The press often does a poor job of reporting on new drugs. The results of a study conducted at Harvard Medical School — and funded by The Commonwealth Fund and the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation — suggest that the media coverage of Celebrex was hardly unusual.

The Harvard findings, which have been presented at two public conferences, looked at media coverage of Fosamex, a bone-building drug; pravastatin, a cholesterol-lowering agent; and the use of aspirin for preventing cardiovascular disease.

In a sample of 207 television and newspaper stories about new drugs aired or published between 1994 and 1998, the Harvard scientists found that 53 percent of them did not mention potential risks and side effects. And 61 percent of the stories that quoted an expert clinician or study with a financial tie to the drug companies, failed to reveal that link.

The study pointed out another serious deficiency in the coverage — how benefits of the drugs are often framed in the press. For example, the researchers found that when Fosamex was coming onto the market in 1996, all three network evening news programs reported that women who took the drug had 50 percent fewer hip fractures, or that the drug cut the risk of fractures by about half — a figure that indicates what is called relative risk.

Relative risk, while accurate, gives only

a partial picture. It measures the risk of the adverse outcome in those who receive treatment divided by the risk in the control group. For example, in one trial of Fosamex, 2 percent of the women who took a placebo experienced hip fractures, while 1 percent in the group who took the drug did not. In relative terms, this is a 50 percent reduction.

But in terms of absolute risk — the risk of the adverse outcome in the control group *minus* the risk in the treatment group — the difference is only a 1 percentage point reduction. That sounds far less dramatic, and is not likely to appear in company press releases. But it may be more useful to a woman who is weighing the potential risks and long-term effects. "There are many circumstances in which relative risk doesn't convey the full picture," says Dr. Mark Chassin, chairman of the department of health policy at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

The Harvard researchers found that of the 124 stories that quantified benefits, 83 percent used the more dramatic relative framing, and 3 percent used absolute framing. Only 14 percent presented both, which would give a reader or viewer the most tools to make a judgment.

"The distortion of numbers is our biggest bane for both physicians and patients," says Dr. Robert Rangno, associate professor of pharmacology and therapeutics at the University of British Columbia. Rangno tries to help physicians interpret the drugs properly, and his ideas also apply to journalists:

■ If the long-term consequences of taking the drug are not known, say so. Look at the FDA review documents, which are sometimes on the FDA's Web site.

■ Pay attention to warnings in FDA news releases and to *The Medical Letter On Drugs and Therapeutics*, a well-respected newsletter. On Celebrex, the *Letter* said short-term studies showed it caused fewer ulcers than older drugs, but cautioned that "whether serious gastrointestinal bleeding will occur less frequently with celecoxib [Celebrex] remains to be established."

■ Realistically interpret the benefits and risks, and don't rely solely on relative framing.

■ Ask the drug companies about financial ties to expert clinicians who are made available to discuss a new drug.

—Trudy Lieberman

Lieberman is health policy editor for *Consumer Reports* and contributing editor to *CJR*.

## WRITERS

# KING OF THE OBITs

## Full Lives, Full Sentences

Take, for instance, Anton Rosenberg of Greenwich Village, a pal of Jack Kerouac's and a painter of acknowledged talent who embodied the hipster ideal of cool "to such a laid-back degree and with such determined detachment that he never amounted to much of anything."

Or Frederic A.C. Wardenburg 3d, who briefly during World War II vacated his gray and staid life as a DuPont executive to penetrate German lines as a spy for the Manhattan Project and along the way enjoyed "liberating wine cellars and having drinks with Marlene Dietrich in the Ritz bar."

Or Helen Bunce, a.k.a. "the Mitten Lady," a religious woman from up near Lake Ontario who spent her days knitting mittens and hats and scarves for poor children all over the world, "who knitted so many mittens she didn't know what to do unless she was knitting more mittens."

Anyone who's given more than a casual glance at the obit page of *The New York Times* could tell instantly that the writer who provided these characters with their ultimate send-off had to have been none other than Robert McG. (for McGill) Thomas Jr., 60. A long-time rewrite man

Robert McG. Thomas Jr.





and sportswriter, Thomas, lately on sick leave but eager to get back, has in the autumn days of his career set the mordant craft of obituary writing on the road to becoming high newspaper art.

Whether it's the luncheonette cook who emerged as the chopped liver queen of the Bronx, or the Chicago tailor who came up with the design for the Zoot Suit, or the Hopi mystic who sprinkled cornmeal on the podium before addressing the United Nations in his quest for World Peace, Thomas has a genius for illuminating that sometimes ephemeral apogee in people's lives when they prove capable of generating a brightly burning spark.

"With a few phone calls Bob can take these stories and give them such a sense of humanity and personality that they become a celebration of life rather than a funeral," says Norma Sosa, the *Times* editor who in 1994 plucked Thomas away from the sports side after admiring, among other things, the manner in which he memorialized the life of boxer Jack Sharkey. Thomas wrote that in Sharkey's 1927 loss to Jack Dempsey he had turned to the referee to complain about a low blow, creating a window of inattention Dempsey used for landing a tremendous haymaker "that knocked Sharkey into the middle of the previous morning." The "previous morning" came from the fact that when Sharkey finally regained consciousness he groggily reminded his manager that he had to fight Dempsey that night.

Aside from his byline, there are several clues to recognizing a Thomas opus, one of which is a magnified attention to the salient detail. He felt, for instance, that a profile of the inventor of kitty litter would have been incomplete had he not also informed readers that cats were bred originally to the desert climes of Egypt, and thus "make such an efficient use of water that they produce a highly concentrated urine that is one of the most noxious effluences of the animal kingdom."

In his leads, Thomas strives to work free of the inevitable "who" clause that bedevils all obit writers and find a more graceful way into the piece. Witness the opening to his obit about a 1930s nightclub belle from Georgia, who sat at the piano with George Gershwin while he composed *Porgy and Bess* and was limoed around by Condé Nast: "Honeychile Wilder is dead, and if the '21' Club is not in actual mourning, it's because the venerable former

speakeasy on West Fifty-second Street was closed for vacation when word got around that one of its most memorable former patrons had died at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center."

He also harbors a deep distaste for the traditionally short, declarative newspaper sentence in favor of a rat's nest of dependent clauses whereby the thing seems to die and then comes back to life several times over until the reader despairs of ever arriving at a period, the champion in this regard being a eighty-eight-word wonder that led off an obit for Anne Hummert, creator of the classic radio serial "Ma Perkins." And Thomas tends to talk the way he writes. "Now, while I will concede to you that I might write a sentence that may be too long," he says, settling into his chair, "I am totally convinced from experience and when all is said and done that, whatever you can say is deficient in a sentence for being overly long, it is decidedly better than the two or three or four sentences, which is what happens to it when it's broken up by . . ." and here a rare note of venom . . . "the desk."

Lanky and white-haired, with a slightly faded accent from Shelbyville, Tennessee, Thomas matriculated for a while at Yale but flunked out in 1959 for having "majored in New York." Because of his fond experience on the *Yale Daily News*, he saw his future in the newspaper business. "It dawned on me that what I was doing at the *Daily News* was exactly what *The New York Times* was doing, and most of the time I was doing it better."

That year he started on the *Times* as a copy boy, labored up the cursus honorum, eventually to cover everything from police and city hall to society and financial news. Before settling down in sports, he spent seven years on rewrite in the 1970s, an experience that provides him his fondest memories. "To me, rewrite is the ultimate of being a journalist," he says. "Whether you're covering the pope's tour of Poland or some airplane crash in Ceylon, you're doing it all by phone and you're the last line of the paper's defense. When I get sent out on a story I just get overloaded. You get so much stuff you can't possibly use — I mean I could write a novel."

Thomas gets assigned his obits by the desk and, because of his reputation, lands the colorful characters rather than pillars of the community. For this reason he has little chance to follow the practice of the famous *Times* obit man Alden Whitman, who liked

to interview subjects in advance, and so deploys his phone work these days looking for facts that don't usually make it into the clips. This was how he found out about Fred Rosenstiel, a wealthy son of a Dutch businessman who devoted his life to planting gardens in parks and housing projects around New York City. As the only one in his family to escape from the Nazis, friends said, Rosenstiel "seemed to find it hard to forgive himself for surviving the Holocaust." He did his planting, Thomas's obit said, "to alleviate an abiding sadness in his heart."

More often, though, Thomas finds himself patched into the home of the deceased where relatives and friends are dwelling on lighter memories. "What do you do at a wake? — you tell what the guy was like, you remember the great times, the stories. And so what I look for is where there might have been a twinkle in the guy's eye. If I have any skill, I think that's where it comes in."

—Bruce Porter

Porter, a contributing editor of *CJR*, started in newspapers as an obit man at The Waterbury Republican, in Waterbury, Connecticut.

## MAGAZINES

# INSIDE OUTSIDE

## Can It Stay on the Mountain?

To understand the success of *Outside* magazine in recent years, just listen to its answering machine. On it, a chipper female voice informs callers that *Outside* is the only magazine in history to win three consecutive National Magazine Awards for general excellence — in 1996, 1997, and 1998. "That's like winning the Oscar for best picture three years in a row!" the voice exclaims.

But a better metaphor might be basketball's Chicago Bulls, the team that won three straight titles and was then promptly dismantled. Like Michael Jordan's old crew, *Outside* has undergone





## LANGUAGE CORNER

### GOING NATIVE

The caption described a woman living in New York's suburbs as "a former native of Kosovo," but unless she was literally born again, that can't be. A "native" of someplace is someone who was born there, and the places where we're born never change. The woman was a native of Kosovo and always would be; she was a former resident. We can use "native" loosely, distinguishing, say, between natives and tourists, but the looseness has to be instantly apparent. "Former native" is illiterate and, alas, all too common.

—Evan Jenkins

A lot more about writing right is in *Language Corner* at CJR's Website, [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org).

massive change. In recent months the Santa Fe-based magazine's top editing team, Mark Bryant and Susan Casey, has walked out, as have its managing editor, its associate art director, and, along the way, a few writers. And *Outside* faces increased competition. Can it continue to thrive?

*Outside* is one of the true magazine success stories of the '90s. Since 1988, its circulation has doubled to more than 550,000 and in five years its ad revenues have shot from \$26 million to \$56 million. Its prosperity has been so great that last fall it launched *Women Outside*, "the magazine for 51 percent of the world's most active people."

Under Bryant's leadership *Outside* built a loyal readership that appreciated strong writing and an eclectic story mix. It was *Outside* that "discovered" talents like John Krakauer, author of *Into Thin Air*, and Sebastian Junger, who wrote *The Perfect Storm*. Parts of both books first ran in *Outside*. The magazine put workout tips and rock climbing stories next to more serious environmental reports and sociological pieces — such as a May '92 story simply titled "Why Do We Fish?" or Jane Smiley's 1994 piece about what fox hunting meant to her as a child.

*Outside*'s success has made other publishers eager to tap the nation's increasing interest in camping, hiking, and kayaking — or at least reading about such things. This spring National Geographic premiered *Adventure*, Times Mir-

ror launched *Outdoor Explorer*, and Hearst retooled *Sports Afield*, its 113-year-old hunting and fishing magazine, with an eye toward capturing some of the backpacking yuppie/extreme sports market.

All of this means *Outside*'s new editor, Hal Espen, 44, a former senior editor at *The New Yorker*, has inherited the best and worst of situations — a thriving magazine, but an increasingly tough market, and without the editorial team, contacts, and institutional knowledge that led *Outside* to its peak.

He does have something his predecessors lacked, however — more money to work with. Bryant's nine years as editor of *Outside* were marked by a well-known feud with chairman/editor-in-chief Lawrence J. Burke, 56, who was reluctant to spend what Bryant thought was needed to hire the additional top-flight editorial talent necessary to keep the magazine improving. Burke started *Outside* in 1977 with the profits he made as a computer salesman in Chicago, and some say he was slow to recognize that his project had grown beyond a hobby into a big-time magazine.

Former staffers say they were overworked and underpaid, hardly new complaints from journalists, but *Outside* was trying to lure editorial talent away from competitive, high-paying places like Manhattan. Until recently, the magazine's 401k plan matched contributions for only the first \$300 employees put in. It also didn't help that Santa Fe's public schools spend about \$3,964 per pupil in 1995-96, the latest figures, compared with \$4,604 for the state and \$5,689 for the nation. Many of the editors interested in *Outside* are looking for a good place to raise their kids.

But the mass staff exodus and the increased competition may have helped pry open Burke's pocketbook. Since Espen's promotion to the top editorial spot, *Outside* has gone fishing for talent in New York and landed some big catches, including *Allure* senior editor Mary Turner. Espen eventually expects to have four or five more editors on the masthead than the fifteen that were there when Bryant left.

As for other changes, Espen says readers should expect perhaps a few alterations. "We're going to be looking for livelier covers and we want to be younger in voice and orientation. We may have slightly more mainstream profiles and more special issues," Espen says. But in the end, the success of

Espen's regime may be contingent on an open checkbook. *Outside* is still on the top of the mountain, and it may be up to Lawrence Burke to make sure it stays there.

—Dante Chinni

Chinni is a free-lance writer who lives in Washington, D.C.

## TELEVISION

### THE 60 MINUTES EFFECT

We all have a sense of the power of the press, but few can quantify it quite as well as Dress For Success, a New York City-based charity that provides job-interview wardrobes to low-income women. The outfit has received good press in the past, but a favorable *60 Minutes* profile on May 23 was the "gem and crown," as Holly Rosenthal, its communications director, put it. What happens when nineteen million people see a story about a good charity's good works? Well, among other things, the attention generated:

■ Between 600-900 calls to the charity's headquarters, DFS Worldwide, specifically mentioning *60 Minutes*. DFS hired extra staffers to handle the influx. More than 150 of those callers expressed an interest in starting their own local chapters. Fifty starter kits have been mailed out and the organization expects many of them to result in new chapters.

■ The attention of corporate sponsors, offering products (stockings, shoes, necklaces), promotional services, and money donations as large as a \$75,000 contribution from Bank America to DFS Worldwide.

■ The decision of three other charities with similar missions to join DFS Worldwide and share in the benefits of a now-recognizable name. The three are in the process of making an official name change to Dress For Success.

Rosenthal expects the forty-chapter organization to double in size by 2000 as a direct result of the *60 Minutes* exposure.

—Elizabeth Werner

Elizabeth Werner is an intern for CJR.

## HOW THEY PLAYED IT

# LOW SCORE

## Press Angst Over Standardized Tests

When the Department of Education produced a guide that warned educators who rely heavily on standardized exams for admissions or promotions that they might be violating federal law — who got the story right?

- A) *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- B) *Los Angeles Times*
- C) *The New York Times*
- D) *The Washington Post*
- E) *The Wall Street Journal*
- F) none of the above

The proposed guide, "Nondiscrimination in High-Stakes Testing: A Resource Guide," presented what the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) characterized as a synthesis of existing law on the subject. Its key passage read, in part:

The use of any educational test which has a significant disparate impact on members of any particular race, national origin, or sex is discriminatory, and a violation of Title VI and/or Title IX, respectively, unless it is educationally necessary and there is no practicable form of assessment which meets the educational institution's needs and would have less of a disparate impact.

Not to worry, the OCR told journalists who bothered to inquire about the document. The guide, a draft four years in the making, broke no new legal ground, the office said. No big deal.

Because many journalists bought this line they didn't cover the story. As a result, most readers first heard about it not through news stories, but via op-ed pieces mostly written by anti-affirmative-action conservatives.

The guide was a big deal indeed to many in education circles, including the American Council on Education, representing almost 2,000 colleges and universities, and the College Board and Educational Testing Service, which respectively sponsor and produce the well-known SAT test. The reason? As a group, African-Americans and Latinos score lower than whites on standardized tests, and women tend to score lower than men on math tests. Standardized tests clearly have a "disparate" impact on these groups. So the

guide, its critics said, serves as a federal warning to educational institutions not to rely on such tests. Or a how-to-sue map if they do.

To Patrick Healy, political editor at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a respected weekly that covers colleges and universities, the uproar in educational circles made the guide "an important national story." Higher education sources he spoke to thought it staked out a hard-line position in the contentious debate on the role affirmative action plays in education. They used words, he said, like "unprecedented, extraordinary." With the next issue of the *Chronicle* already in the mail, Healy broke the story on the weekly's Web site (<http://chronicle.merit.edu>) on May 17, following up with a more comprehensive account in the print issue dated May 28.

Then . . . nothing. Or almost nothing, at least on news pages. Between May 17, when the *Chronicle* broke the story, and June 9, when the *Los Angeles Times* briefly mentioned the controversy in a B2 news column, the only major daily to touch the standardized testing tale in its news pages was *The Wall Street Journal* (which ran a solid A2 piece on May 26).

Neither the *Los Angeles Times* nor *The New York Times* has a Washington education correspondent, but both papers say their silence on the guide was more a question of judgment than a missed story. "The *Chronicle* had a different interpretation of the importance of this than we did," says Tami Dennis, interim education editor at the *Los Angeles Times*. "Yeah, it had education insiders upset, but how much of a difference was that going to make, really?"

David Corcoran, the education editor of *The New York Times*, says his initial reaction to the story was, "this is interesting, but what have they actually done?" Reporter Steven Holmes told him that "the story was less clear-cut than it

seemed," Corcoran says. "He wanted to take some time to explore it more."

Into this news void rode the op-ed writers, who complained about the guide throughout May and prompted congressional hearings about it in late June. John Leo was first, with a column — THE FEDS STRIKE BACK — that ran in the *New York Daily News* May 22 and in *U.S. News & World Report* May 31. He was followed by Stephen Balch in the *New York Post* (May



Patrick Healy of the *Chronicle*

23), John O'Sullivan in the *Chicago Sun-Times* (May 25), Peter Schrag in the *Sacramento Bee* (May 26), and a series of editorials in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Detroit News*, *The Indianapolis Star*, and *The Washington Times*.

So readers mostly got one side of a complicated debate. Meanwhile, because the *Chronicle* was the first paper to report the story, press discussion about the guide was framed almost entirely in terms of higher education.

But standardized tests — and their "disparate impact" — may be more important in the K-12 sphere, where foes of "social promotion" are embracing the idea of make-or-break proficiency tests that would determine whether students move up.

*The New York Times* did a news story about the guide on June 12, only after Abigail Thernstrom, co-author of *America in Black and White*, had thundered against the proposed guidelines in a June 10 piece on the *Times*'s op-ed page. Holmes's June 12 story, essentially a round-up of the hostile reaction to the guide, oddly included "news stories in education journals" as among the work published by "anti-affirmative-action conservatives."

When the debate became the subject of congressional hearings before Michigan Republican Representative Peter Hoekstra's education subcommittee on June 22, only *USA Today*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and a college-paper wire service covered them. *The Washington Post* continued to ignore the story, leaving its readers to understand the issue via a June 12 op-ed piece — COERCED DIVERSITY — by the iconoclastic Nat Hentoff. Not even Hentoff was happy with that circumstance. "The *Washington Post*," he says, "blew it."

—James B. Kelleher

Kelleher is a writer in San Diego. (Answers to quiz: A and E.)

in the public interest

## An Outbreak of Internet-Phobia

by Lawrence K. Grossman

**B**ack in the 1980s, a series of horrific chemical accidents in India, Mexico, and the U.S. killed, injured, or forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people. In 1990, Congress ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to require every chemical facility in the nation to prepare a plan for dealing with a worst-case scenario, and then to make all the plans available to the public. Armed with that information, citizens would know what possible risks they face and could pressure local plants to improve their safety records. The deadline for submission of those plans was June 21, 1999.

The EPA announced it intended to post all the worst-case scenario plans on its Web site so that, with the stroke of a computer key, anybody living near a chemical plant could log on to the EPA's Web site and learn how many in the community might be killed or maimed from a massive accidental release of toxic fumes, what chemicals are manufactured and stored, how many chemical accidents that plant had in the past five years, the location of nearby schools and hospitals, and what emergency response steps would be taken in the event of a disaster.

Industry groups and law enforcement agencies railed against the EPA's decision to post the information on the Internet, calling it a "national security risk," a godsend for terrorists looking for an opportunity to wreak havoc on the United States. The FBI warned that the EPA's Web site could be used "as a targeting mechanism in a terrorist or criminal incident." To House Commerce Committee chairman Tom Bliley (R-Va.), the EPA's modern-day response to the law Congress had passed almost a decade earlier (before anyone would have even considered making anything

public via the Internet) was a "reckless plan to put the data at every terrorist's fingertips...easily searchable from Boston to Baghdad, from Los Angeles to Libya."

Since Gutenberg invented the printing press, authorities have greeted every major advance in information technology with fear and suspicion. The Internet is no exception. "As new technologies have acquired the functions of the press," MIT media scholar Ithiel de Sola Pool wrote, "they have not acquired the rights of the press." Each new information technology has received less constitutional protection than its predecessors. It's as if the First Amendment has had to be reinvented for every new medium.

Presumably, if the EPA had decided

### IS THE INTERNET A TREASURE TROVE FOR TERRORISTS?

to make the information public through traditional media, like newspapers, television, and radio, no ruckus would have been raised. Indeed, that's what Congress expected the agency to do when it amended the Clean Air Act in 1990 and ordered the EPA to gather, and then go public with the worst-case scenario information. But the Internet is a brand-new medium, with fast-growing public access and instantaneous worldwide distribution. Authorities fear its power to put information into the wrong hands, or into the hands of those who are ill-prepared to handle it responsibly.

Under pressure, the EPA quickly backed away from its Internet plan. In June the Senate passed a bill, now being considered by the House, that gives the administration one year to figure out how to release the chemical disaster information without letting it fall into the wrong hands.

I asked staff members of the House Commerce Committee how they thought that could be done. The options they suggested seem of dubious practicality: The EPA could put the data on a CD Rom that people can read but not reproduce. The agency could make the information available in library reading rooms and government offices without printers; people would be prohibited from copying any of it by hand. The EPA could release the data for only a few sites at a time and limit the copies available to ten to fifty. It could keep the information from the general public altogether and release the data only to local fire, emergency, environment, and law enforcement officials, thereby, of course, thwarting the major purpose of the 1990 law.

Veteran newspaperman Paul K. McMasters, representing the Freedom of Information Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, testified against the Senate bill on the grounds that, "restricting the flow of information leaves citizens in ignorance while a variety of information is readily available to would-be-terrorists who care to check telephone and city directories (online or off-line), attend chemical industry trade shows, check out chemical manufacturing directories in libraries, peruse EPA databases already posted, or even access congressional testimony posted on the Internet."

The concern of chairman Bliley and others, that the EPA's worst-scenario information could be used for evil purposes, is understandable. But the newspaper editors are right. Any terrorist in the world who surfs the 'net today can find a treasure trove of free intelligence about the nation's chemical facilities by logging on to Dowchemical.com, Exxon.com, Unioncarbide.com, and other such Web sites.

I did, and within thirty minutes I gathered a comprehensive list of the chemical

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products the companies make, the locations of their major U.S. chemical production and storage facilities, and toll-free phone numbers that promise to deliver still more detailed information if called. A terrorist who logs on to the Environmental Defense Fund's Web site, [www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org), will find easy-to-read maps marked with neat red squares showing the precise location of every U.S. chemical facility that has experienced an accidental emission.

Last June, another government agency, the National Institutes of Health, ignited a similarly passionate controversy

over a seemingly benign proposal to release biomedical research reports on the Internet. The NIH director, Nobel Laureate Dr. Harold E. Varmus, recommended that full biomedical research information be made available at no cost to anyone anywhere in the world who logs on to a proposed new NIH Web site, E-biomed (CJR, July/August). Varmus said that his idea for an NIH Internet publishing initiative would be "a democratizing force" that could speed the progress of science by accelerating the exchange of information among scientists, and vastly increase its accessibility to patients, sci-

entists, and doctors the world over. With more than 22 million adults now going online to find health information, it isn't fear of terrorists that's causing the fuss over the NIH plan but fear that ordinary Americans would use the Internet to gain unfettered access to biomedical research without the guidance of scientists, doctors, or expert journalists.

**A**n unusually critical editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine* by the magazine's respected former top editor, Dr. Arnold S. Relman of Harvard Medical School, called Varmus's proposal "risky at best" because it could confuse and alarm online consumers. Patients and even doctors might misinterpret or misunderstand experimental data, with disastrous consequences. Other critics complain that E-biomed threatens the survival of hugely profitable traditional publications like the *New England Journal of Medicine*, whose readers would have little reason to buy them if they can get the contents free online.

In defense of Varmus, a research scientist in Adelaide, Australia, posted an e-mail comparing E-biomed to the introduction of literacy and printing technology in medieval Europe. "Were all books going to be authoritative and accurate? Were some dangerous to society?" he asked. "We can imagine priests saying, 'Mass printing and wide dissemination of books is O.K. so long as we insure that every book is approved by a priest review process.'" In the early days of printing, of course, every publication had to be approved by church or government authorities who feared that unlicensed printers might spread dangerous information.

In today's multimedia world, it is actually no longer possible to give people the information they need while withholding it from the few who may misuse it. Propelled by the Internet, the means of disseminating information are rapidly outstripping anyone's ability to restrict or suppress it, including information that, in evil hands, might be considered dangerous. It's the price we pay for the tremendous benefits the Information Age brings to us all, for the first time making available what we need to know about the risks of chemical accidents in our communities, as well as full reports on the latest advances in biomedical research. ♦



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# darts & laurels

◆ **DART** to the Raleigh, North Carolina, *News & Observer*, for keeping its eye off the ball. Despite the remarkably close local connection to the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team — eight of its twenty members come out of the powerhouse soccer program at the University of North Carolina twenty-three miles away, while stars Carla Overbeck and Mia Hamm both live in Chapel Hill — *The News & Observer* blocked the idea of covering firsthand the final World Cup championship game against China at the Rose Bowl in July: not enough interest, management decided, and just too far away. Instead, the paper's coverage of that singular event — a match that attracted a crowd of 83,000 male and female enthusiasts and a television audience of 40 million in the U.S. alone — consisted of wire-service reports and bylined stories from such other outlets as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Detroit Free Press*, and the *New York Daily News*. Curiously, a post-victory piece in *Editor & Publisher* included *The News & Observer* in its round-up of several papers that, because of some particular interest in the Pasadena game, had given the story its head. "We squeezed a few things into other pages to make sure we had the room," boasted a *News & Observer* editor. No mention was made of the letter sent to top managers by twenty-nine staffers kicking about the disservice to its readers and the team.

◆ **DART** to *The Tampa Tribune* and editorial page editor Edwin A. Roberts Jr., for going overboard. So high was Mister Roberts on a proposal last June to launch the *USS Forrestal*, the Navy's first super aircraft carrier, as a \$12 million tourist-drawing sea, air, and space museum in the downtown Channelside District, that over the next eleven months he lost his journalistic bearings. Besides the twenty-five columns and editorials saluting the idea, Roberts enlisted support by organizing several private meetings with captains of local industry and politics. As reported by the *St. Petersburg Times* in a May 9 story detailing its rival's questionable involvement in the project, one such private lunch meeting, paid for by the *Tribune*, included — in violation of Florida sunshine law — both a port-authority board member and the mayor, without whose signed letter to the Navy the *Forrestal* project would sink. (He signed; it didn't). "I don't think we'd have a project if it wasn't for Ed Roberts," the buoyant chairman of the museum board told the *Times*. But Jay Black, a

professor of media ethics at the University of South Florida, steers by a truer star. "Let journalists be journalists," said Black; "let power mongers be power mongers."

◆ **LAUREL** to the Hartford, Connecticut, *Advocate*, part of a chain of alternative weeklies that recently tied the knot with Times Mirror's *Hartford Courant*, for maintaining its spirit of independence. In a May 13 story about a city audit of the Department of Public Works, the *Advocate* reported not only that over the past twenty years Hartford had lost more than \$2 million in revenues by allowing companies to rent municipal land (mostly parking lots) at rates well below market — but also revealed that among the largest beneficiaries of such mismanagement has been the *Hartford Courant*. (Savings to the paper: between \$347,000 and \$694,000, by the auditor's conservative estimate.) In its follow-up story a long nine days later (in just two of its ten editions), the *Courant* noted its own involvement only in a vague reference to the city's expired leases with several corporations. Its editorial on the subject (May 28) took no note of itself at all.

◆ **DART** to WDSI, Fox News's television station on Channel 61 in Chattanooga, for journalistic harlotry. A June 29 flier faxed around town to prominent businesses contained a shameless proposition: Fox-61 would produce a series of three "positive" news segments about "your company" — indeed, would lend its "most credible programming for the image of your company" — and air them on its Morning News, its Mid-day News, and its News at 10. Better yet, it would do all this, and promotional spots too, for a mere "\$15,000 — That is 4.5 cents per household!" According to a report in the *Chattanooga Times-Free Press*, however, local businesses, apparently more ethical than the station, wouldn't touch the offer, while news director Dave Parker blamed it on the marketing department. Meanwhile, WDSI general manager Jim Wright claims credit for personally promoting the idea of featuring the segments as news and not as advertisements. In fact, when the reporter called Wright to make inquiries for her story, he thought she was calling to line up her paper for his Tribute to Chattanooga program.

◆ **DART** to the Ann Arbor, Michigan, *News*, for ruining in opposite directions. In an April 19 editorial



headed RECKLESS RUN, the *News* weighed in against the annual spring ritual in which University of Michigan students celebrate the final day of classes by streaking across the campus at midnight in their birthday suits. Fearful of "a serious, quite possibly ugly, incident" because the ten-year-old stunt has come to attract so many gawking, drunken "creeps," the editorial argued that it was time to "say 'enough'"; indeed, if the *Ann Arbor News* could have its way, it would "favor . . . charging [the naked participants] with the appropriate misdemeanor." A bare twenty-four hours later, it was an altogether different story on the paper's Web site, run by its sister company. There, below the paying ads, readers were invited to "click through the photo gallery" of Naked Mile runners and "experience the spectacle."

◆ **LAUREL** to the reporters, editors, columnists, photographers, librarians, and copy clerks of the *San Francisco Examiner* — virtually the entire staff — who insisted that attention must be paid. Shaken by the sudden death of a colleague at the age of forty-six, and convinced it had been caused, at least in part, by exhaustion and anxiety — conditions that come with the territory for the temporary, on-call editor afraid to say no to any assignment, day or night, in hope of securing a permanent job ever-dangling out of reach — the paper's staff petitioned editor and publisher Timothy O. White for more humane treatment of such "extra" human resources. What's more, the staff stood ready to back its words with deeds: in addition to suggesting that on-call employees be given consistent schedules, guaranteed shifts, requisite breaks, and preference in hiring for full-time jobs, the 154 signators asked that they themselves be allowed "to donate sick days, comp days, holidays, and vacation . . . to colleagues who may need them because they are ill." White, who came to the *Examiner* only in January, is considering the proposals. The generous example set by the staff will make them hard to turn down.


◆ **DART** to the *Los Angeles Times*, for applying a double standard to a rival and itself. In August 1998, when the competing *Daily News* donated \$60,000 to supporters of a ballot initiative that would have given cityhood to Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley, the *Times* made its disapproval clear. Its page-one metro story included a *Times* spokeswoman's lofty rejection of a challenge from initiative supporters to match the contribution as well as her statement on corporate policy — "The *Times* . . . does not donate to groups advocating ballot initiatives." The story's lingering quote was solicited from expert ethicist James Naughton, director of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies: "I think

that we should be as careful as possible about keeping journalism separate from civic ventures trying to influence public opinion." Ten months later, however, the *Times* had changed its view on ballot initiative contributions — as well as its view on what makes news. Its page-one metro story on Saturday, June 5, reported fully on the sweep of endorsements of a ballot initiative to reform the city charter from civic, religious, and news organizations, including the *L.A. Times*. It also devoted considerable space to a controversial \$200,000 contribution from Rupert Murdoch. But — as revealed in the June 8 *Daily News* — the *Times*'s 1,187-word story was curiously incomplete: it neglected to mention that on Thursday, June 3, *Times Mirror* had donated \$50,000 to the reform campaign.

◆ **LAUREL & DART** to the Coos Bay, Oregon, *World*, for a well-tempered but less than stainless report. Confronted with a bid by Nucor Steel to bring a mill to the economically hard-hit Coos Bay area, the *World* dispatched city editor Elise Hamner to Berkeley County, South Carolina, where a similar Nucor plant has been in operation the last three years. Hamner's solid, balanced report on what she found there (published on four consecutive weekends in April) provided the community with a realistic glimpse into its likely future. But its impact was unfortunately blunted by the paper's May 1 editorial wrap-up, "Why We Went, How We Got There," wherein the editors whined that Nucor had not made good on its promise to pay for Hamner's airline tickets.

◆ **DART** to the *New York Post*, for forgetting the journalistic vows. The marriage of Rupert Murdoch, chairman of the News Corporation and daddy of the *Post*, to Wendy Deng, former executive of the News Corporation's Star TV, got plenteous treatment in the Sunday, June 27 *Post*. A seven-paragraph story, detailing the number of guests, the name of the judge, the length of the fireworks display in New York Harbor that followed the ceremony on Murdoch's yacht, the music, flowers, and entertainment as well as the couple's wedding finery, was surrounded by five album-style photos (e.g., "Sharing the joy of the moment"; "Murdoch and his beautiful bride"). But the *Post* left it to the competition — *The New York Times* and the *New York Daily News* — to provide a far fuller account of the basic facts, including the age of the bride (32), the age of the groom (68), the length of his previous marriage (32 years) and the time that had elapsed since his divorce (17 days).

*This column is written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.*



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# REPORTING RACE

## Diversity Fatigue? Here's a Tonic

*Race and ethnicity were hot stories not long ago and subjects like the stock market made eyes glaze over. Now the situation has reversed. How do we get off that dime? One way might be to emulate the approach of journalists who produce rich and yeasty stories on these topics. This was the idea behind a workshop at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in June. As conferences go, this one was not your father's Oldsmobile. It joined a group of 17 "gatekeepers" — editors, news directors, and other senior people — with 15 reporters and producers whose stellar work was the starting point for three days of discussion. This special report springs from those talks. We begin with a reporter's notebook on the workshop itself, and an anecdote that illustrates a theme that kept popping up — how good stories on race and ethnicity often require straight talk inside the newsroom.*

BY MIKE HOYT

### "We Need To Talk"



ANCHELE KUBAGA, THE SEATTLE TIMES

In 1997, after President Clinton called for a national conversation on race, KRON-TV in San Francisco decided to do its bit by producing an in-depth "About Race" series. It was supposed to avoid "preaching, sensationalism, and unnecessary conflict, whatever that is," Craig Franklin, news special projects producer for the NBC affiliate, told the Columbia workshop. It would run sporadically over the year, but kick off with five parts, nearly sixty minutes in all, in the Feb-

ruary '98 sweeps period. A daunting assignment. So daunting, Franklin said, that he dreamed he'd been assigned to vacuum the long-term parking lot of the city airport, row after row.

To make matters worse Franklin, a white male, was paired with a video editor named Karyne Holmes, a black woman with whom he was then not speaking. The two had worked together on a project about former Negro League baseball players, though "worked together" may not be the best description.

Holmes, who had a powerful emotional interest in the baseball piece, felt that her producer was too controlling, and too jealous of the bonds that seemed to form between her and the old players they were interviewing. As deadline loomed Franklin, who found himself increas-

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ingly disagreeing with his partner on the direction of the piece, began to boil. It got worse. Franklin blew up and questioned Holmes's competence; Holmes called Franklin a racist.

Then, three chilly years later, the two found themselves thrown together on this new mega-project on, of all things, race. Holmes picked up the tale at the workshop: Franklin eventually came to her, she told the assembled journalists, and said, "We need to talk." He said this, as Holmes described it, in a way that was more statement of fact than demand.

The pair took a long walk down busy Van Ness Avenue and negotiated a treaty. "We decided that from this day on, no matter what came out of this project, we were going to be honest with each other, and we were going to be respectful," Holmes said. "And that was enough for me." Slowly, the two became partners in more than name. The race project moved forward and, in terms of both ratings and quality, became a success. It won several awards, including the George Foster Peabody.

At the workshop, Holmes read from a thank-you note that Franklin had sent to her after the series ran. And she publicly expressed her gratitude to him — "I'm indebted to this man here to my left," she said. "He knows what I'm talking about."

"If I get emotional or this subject gets emotional, it's okay. We're from California," Franklin joked at one point.

Most of the journalists at the conference figured that diversity fatigue is a given. It exists in newsrooms and out among the readers and viewers. But another thread in the conversation was just how well challenging and solidly reported stories with racial and ethnic themes can play. Gary Pomerantz, who wrote a series about complex black/white relationships titled "From the Heart: Race in Atlanta" for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, says his e-

mail "melted" with the huge flow of reactions to the series (most of them favorable, many telling their own stories about relationships between races). And on the paper's Web site, AccessAtlanta, only the death of Princess Diana beat the record for feedback. In San Francisco, Franklin and Holmes's "About Race" series tied the ratings for the previous year, when the sweeps-week kicked off with more conventional stories about the safety of drinking water. On ABC's *20/20*, producer Karen Saunders watched the Nielsen minute-by-minute ratings climb and stay high through her piece about the practical and the on-the-job problems black women have with their hard-to-manage hair. The show now tries to keep more such race-and-lifestyle stories in development, she says, "because the ratings and letters from the viewers are so very positive."

Annie Nakao of the *San Francisco Examiner* heard some "you're-not-African-American-so-how-dare-you-write-about-this?" responses to her thoughtful MAKING THE GRADE series about the academic underachievement of middle-class African-American youngsters. But she heard much positive reaction too. The National Association of Black Journalists, for example, gave her a first prize/news for the series in its annual awards competition in July. Tom Brokaw's powerful "Why Can't We Live Together?" special on *Dateline NBC*, examining white flight from a Chicago suburb, reached nearly 11 million viewers, beating all three other major networks (which, admittedly, were showing reruns). On ABC's *Nightline*, the



**Top to bottom:**  
Annie Nakao of the *San Francisco Examiner*; Elizabeth Llorente of *The Record*; Michel McQueen of *Nightline*; Henry Williams of *News 12 New Jersey*; Bill Grueskin of *The Wall Street Journal*; Karyne Holmes and Craig Franklin of KRON-TV in San Francisco



PHOTOS BY JOHN MARE SAGOCK

Nielsen national rating for Michel McQueen's "America in Black and White" report about the phenomenon of "colorism" — in which the degree of prejudice among both whites and blacks correlates to the tone of the skin — hit 5.7, well over the 4.4 average *Nightline* rating for 1997.

People do not wake up and say, 'Oh, how I wish to discuss racial problems today,' McQueen pointed out. Yet like a troubled married couple for whom divorce is not in the picture, she said, they seem to yearn at some level for quality discussion.

Before the workshop began, Sig Gissler, the Columbia journalism professor who organized it with the support of the Ford Foundation, had asked the news "gatekeepers" about the state of reporting on race and ethnicity in their shops. Many saw a gathering of strengths. Generally they felt that top management had grown more committed to serious coverage, that their newsrooms had become more diverse, and had begun listening harder to the variety of voices in their communities.

On the other side of the ledger the editors and news directors, all of whom had applied to attend the workshop, worried about excess timidity and failures of imagination. Because people think they don't want to hear about race, the participants agreed, a journalist needs powerful tools — the strong narrative, the increased sophistication, the kind of sensitive and honest reporting that peels another layer off the onion. Readers and listeners "think they've heard it all," *Wall Street Journal* reporter Jonathan Kaufman said to the group. "The bar has been raised



## SPECIAL REPORT



In a closely watched experiment, the *Los Angeles Times* is boosting its coverage of the Latino community throughout the paper for these kinds of stories." (See "By the Throat, By the Heart," page 24.)

Along with imagination and guts, hurling that bar can require a lot of time. Elizabeth Llorente of *The Record*, in northern New Jersey, illustrated the point with a series about racial tensions in Palisades Park, New Jersey. In that town longtime residents felt threatened by two new groups of immigrants — poor Guatemalan day laborers, who crowd street corners every day, waiting for contractors to offer work, and well-to-do Koreans, who have increasingly bought up the downtown. To tell full and nuanced stories about both groups and how they do and do not fit in to Palisades Park, Llorente had to invest the hours.

She had some trouble warming up the Guatemalans. While Llorente speaks Spanish, the day laborers spoke a Mayan dialect. From the jungle, they regarded the reporter as a city slicker. They didn't understand newspapers, let alone one printed in English. Some were illegal, and thus wary. Llorente stood with them on the corners, visited their English classes, and just talked. "We had written about THEM, in capital letters," she told the workshop. "We had never asked, 'Who are you? Tell us about this journey from Guatemala. How did you get from the jungles to Palisades Park?'"

The Koreans, meanwhile, did not

want to make waves. They steered Llorente to their spokesmen, the usual suspects. So did the old-line white residents, who didn't want to advertise their resentments. Again, she visited workplaces and homes, went to schools and on picnics, off and on for weeks. Thanks to that investment, the stories arrived deeply reported and well told.

At the *San Francisco Examiner*, a team of reporters was given the luxury of time for the paper's "New City" project, a continuing series that laid out the vast demographic changes under way in San Francisco (see "Think Big, Be Patient," page 27). Annie Nakao led off the series by writing about Ralph Barsi, an elderly man who showed her the index-card records he has kept of every family that has lived on his block since 1945. People with names like Poletti and Ciucci and Quinlan moved out, while Wongs and Ngs and Luises flocked in.

To get Barsi talking, she drank coffee in his Italian-American social club and homemade brandies in his garage. She advised editors at the workshop, "Give your reporters time. Time allows your reporters to get out of the office and hang out at community listening posts, where real people can be found."

Not all the stories dealing with race were about racism. One piece by Karen Saunders, a *20/20* producer, that was honored and discussed at the workshop was a "getting-to-know-you" sort of story, "Beautiful Bodies." It reported on the difference in how black and white women feel about body weight (see "Telling 'Race Secrets,'" page 28). Black women (and their men), the story reported, are more comfortable with more body. The piece was highly praised as a story that reached the "water cooler level," the kind that people talk about.

When the subject is attitudes about race, in all their subtlety and camouflage, the stories showcased at the workshop

demonstrated TV's X-ray power. In one scene in her *Nightline* piece on "colorism," Michel McQueen meets with college psychology students who had agreed to a test. The test involved getting their impressions of people with varying shades of skin color in several photographs. We see a young woman say that she thinks the dark-skinned girl in picture A looks, "well, sluttier," than the girl in picture B. Then we learn that A and B are the same photo of the same girl, except that in one picture the skin tone was digitally altered. We see a young man explain that a dark girl in another picture looks heavier, and therefore less likely to



*20/20* explores black women's hair problems

be successful and happy, than the very same girl with lighter skin. It is one thing to read about this and quite another to see these reactions mouthed on TV by fresh-faced college students.

The X-ray effect was particularly evident in Tom Brokaw's "Why Can't We Live Together?" special on *Dateline*. Brokaw goes with a woman, Sally Formus, to a shopping center in the heart of Matteson, the attractive Chicago suburb that she had moved away from after blacks began moving in. By now the piece has noted how white flight can lead



In its series, KRON-TV asks a basic question: What is race?



to a downward spiral — in which real estate values can drop and draw poorer people in, followed by troubles. But it has also questioned whether the motor of such spirals is the influx of the new residents or the sudden flight of the old ones. Or the perceptions and assumptions that spur that flight in the first place? In Matteson, the incoming black families were stable and middle class, and the piece makes clear that there was no downward spiral except in the minds of some white residents.

The woman tells Brokaw, "I don't feel safe to come here any more." In his unthreatening way, Brokaw establishes that she has never had a problem in the shopping center, nor has anyone she knows, nor has anyone she ever even heard of. He goes on:

"You know, we keep hearing rumors about crime here, crime in Matteson going up because more black people have moved in. Real estate values have gone down. Schools are terrible. We've gone back and checked that very carefully. Crime really hasn't changed significantly. Real estate values, in fact, have not only stayed steady but they've gone up some. And the school records are really about the same as in other places. Does that surprise you?"

"No," says Formus, looking uneasily out her car window at the mostly black shoppers. "It's just what I see when I come here."

At the workshop, journalists recommended using colleagues of different backgrounds, not as ethnic thought police, but as sounding boards on sensitive pieces. Nakao, for example, said she would never have attempted *MAKING THE GRADE* if she had not been able to discuss her reporting with black reporters and editors at her paper. The journalists spoke of creating a "safe space" for frank discussion. This can be easier said than done.

Even at the Columbia workshop, some participants felt it took the full three days to approach full-candor mode, to cast off the chill of political correctness. By day three, one white news director, William Otwell of WTNH-TV in New Haven, Connecticut, was complaining that he had been "taken aback" by generalizations that had been voiced about white managers early in the workshop. And by the way that some blacks at the workshop, as he saw it, had been quick



**Tom Brokaw examines white flight on *Dateline*; Ted Koppel looks at racial profiling on *Nightline*, while Renee Ferguson reports on another aspect of that problem, in airport drug searches, on Chicago's station WMAQ**

to criticize a white reporter on a question of ethics. And how an unsubstantiated assumption of racism in one discussion about story judgment had been allowed to stand unchallenged. "The parameters seemed set," he said.

Gissler, former editor of *The Milwaukee Journal*, decried the "condition of mutual withholding" that governs so many newsroom discussions that circle around race. "The journalists of color are fearful of being tagged as the diversity nag, the boat rocker. The white journalists are fearful of saying things that will be misconstrued and they will be tagged racist, which is the atomic-bomb word for white people. The net result is, we have discussions that don't really get down to kind of layers we're at right now.

"I think there's a connection between the unleashing of these emotions and the advancement of journalism," he

said. "If there is anything I want you all to do it is go back to the newsrooms and talk with each other."

Several people reacted: One black journalist told Otwell she empathized with his sense of being locked out of the conversation. "This so often happens, quite frankly, to minorities." Journalists must move beyond their comfort zones, she said, and put their thoughts out on the table. Michel McQueen said that for her "Driving While Black" piece for *Nightline*, an early story about racial profiling on the highways, she insisted on working with a team that included a white producer who was skeptical about it. "He pushes against me, I argue with him," she said. "He's not afraid of me."

"I said, 'I need you to be the white guy. If I can be black for you, you can be white for me.'"

In a dinner speech, Mark Willes, chairman and c.e.o. of The Times Mirror Company and former publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, told the participants that he was not into the let's-talk-about-it school of diversity journalism. Willes prefers the let's-do-it mode. He reminded the group of the business imperative for readership diversity — survival. The Latino population of southern California, for example, is about 40 percent, he said, and growing fast. If the *Times* doesn't find a way to reach that part of the population, "we basically will become marginalized in our own communities."

Willes likes props, and he used some of *Times Mirror's* ski and snowboarding magazines to demonstrate what a niched media world we live in, and how, if we intend to reach readers in any particular niche, we first have to understand that niche's culture and language. (A "knuckle-dragger," he instructed, by way of making his point about language, is a skier's word for a snowboarder.) Once you understand the language and culture, he said, you have to find "the specific something" that the people in the niche are looking for, to pull them into your publication.

At the *Los Angeles Times* this specific something is called The Latino Initiative, a concerted effort to integrate coverage of the concerns and culture of Latinos into all parts of the newspaper. It is a serious effort, launched in late December 1998, that involves a dozen Spanish-speaking reporters and a photographer who cover all aspects of Lati-

## SPECIAL REPORT

no life, from business to religion to TV. It includes regular profiles, a new columnist, and a new bureau.

But: Is it working, in terms of penetration into the Latino market? "It has not moved the needle," Willes said.

Why not?

Here Willes turned to another prop. He pointed to a stack of ninety copies of a special reprint of stories from the Latino Initiative. That stack was placed next to another stack of ninety copies of the entire paper — and dwarfed by it. So you see, Willes said, that "despite the fact that we have over ninety articles in the first three months of the Latino Initiative, they get lost. Because the paper is so big and complex."

The solution? To bring the Latino Initiative to the attention of potential Latino readers. "If we are going to succeed with that market," Willes said, "we have to find a way to *market* to that market, so that we can tell them about the journalism we have." Diversity by itself "is nice," he continued, "but it's hard to sustain. Until the diversity effort is imbedded into a total business plan, it's just going to be hanging out there, and the risk of failure is too high."

**Y**ou can't discuss matters of race and ethnicity in America for three days and not stir emotions. Toward the end of the workshop, not long after participants saw Brokaw's "Why Can't We Live Together?" piece, with its bleak portrait of stubborn attitudes, a veteran black journalist's voice began to quaver. "I find this conversation in many ways both pleasing — I'm glad there are nice people out there — and extraordinarily frustrating," she began. "I've been in journalism for thirty years. And I hear the same stereotypes, and we talk about the same problems. And I have to say . . ."

Soon she was apologizing for crying, but still crying, and wondering out loud about what was the point of all the struggle for integration and understanding. "I have good white friends. I probably live in more integrated relationships than most people in this country," she said. "And I'm saddened by this country. I'm horrified . . ." She left the room, sobbing. Someone went to comfort her.

The moderator, also a black woman, did not blink an eye or miss a beat, but went right back into the discussion. Since there was a lot of work to do. ■

## JONATHAN KAUFMAN:



# "By the Throat, By the Heart"

### Q & A

*Jonathan Kaufman, 43, is a big friendly man, a talker. He began to be fascinated by the subject of race after joining The Boston Globe in 1982, in a city whose white working-class neighborhoods had been traumatized by the school-busing controversy. In 1984 he was part of a Pulitzer Prize-winning team that took on Brahmin Boston by exposing the poor racial hiring records of its institutions, including the Globe. He moved to The Wall Street Journal in 1995. There he has been recognized as one of the nation's more sophisticated and compelling writers about racial issues. A Kaufman story often works on two levels. A November '97 piece, *INSIDE OUTSIDERS*, was, at one level, about whether blacks in corporate America must "act white" in order to succeed, but at another, it was a fascinating tale of sibling rivalry between two successful brothers with opposing views on the subject. His *LOCKED-IN* story last October was, on an intellectual level, about whether the threat of prison — so much a part of inner-city life — might be losing its sting, as imprisonment becomes more the norm. On a human level it was about the troubled heart of a ten-year-old girl, Sabrina Branch, whose world is circumscribed by prison walls. Sabrina has trouble accepting that her father, along with other relatives, is locked up. Kaufman spoke in Boston with CJR's senior editor, Mike Hoyt.*

**HOYT:** You suggested at the Columbia workshop that most readers don't really want to read about race. Why?

**KAUFMAN:** Readers are tired. Shelby Steele had a fascinating essay a number of years ago. He wrote, 'If you look at what Martin Luther King said to white people in this country, it was, "I believe in you. You're better than this." He believed in the nobility of whites to rise above. He would quote the Constitution and the Bible.

Starting with the Black Power movement, that shifted to a question of blame. As anybody who has grown up Jewish can tell you, the other side of guilt is resentment. There is a way in which whites have felt guilty about these issues, but now feel resentment about them. They're tired of hearing about them. They don't like being blamed for them.

Also, a lot of the writing about race contradicts their own experience. When I did my book about blacks and Jews [*Broken Alliance*, Simon & Schuster, 1995], one of the chapters was about the change of neighborhoods from largely Jewish to largely black. And one of the consequences of that was that you had many situations in the sixties where there were Jews who were quite liberal who had parents or grandparents stuck in transitional neighborhoods — in Brooklyn, on the south side of Chicago, and all around the country. These neighborhoods were becoming more dangerous, more frightening. Many Jews found their liberal ideas conflicting with a kind of very scary experience.

Similarly, I think a lot of whites have been scared by crime, which to them often has a black face. A lot of reporting about race has tended to ignore those complexities, and basically said to whites, you're to blame for this. I think people just tuned it out. You have to grapple with the ambiguous feelings that people have about race. It's not a simple good and bad, right and wrong.

Also, whites have become a group that thinks they understand blacks, especially poor blacks, very well, but in fact doesn't understand them well at all. That's the paradox. It used to be, perhaps, that there was just ignorance. Now what there is, 'Oh, well I know all about that problem.' But in fact they don't. It's easier to write about Kosovo than about inner-city Baltimore, because people think they know all about inner-city Baltimore.

**HOYT:** Your stories are usually about an idea, but they're embodied in a person. I don't know which comes first, the chick-en or the egg.

**KAUFMAN:** Usually we have the idea or at least the sense of a theme, and we then look for a way to tell the story. You sort of call around and churn the waters, and try to find a way to tell the story. When you home in on the human part of these stories, you realize, not just that they're more interesting, but that the trajectory of the people's lives becomes much more understandable.

**HOYT:** How does the Baltimore story, about the little girl Sabrina, fit in with that? You started with a theme in mind, the effect of prisons on communities. How did the reporting unfold?

**KAUFMAN:** Bill [Grueskin, who is often Kaufman's editor at the *Journal*] thought maybe we should look at a probation officer, or probation office, and see who passes through. I was thinking maybe we should look at a street or a neighborhood, to see the impact on the community. We discovered early on that on Sunday visiting day you have all these vans that go from the neighborhoods to the prisons to visit the prisoners. And I had this image in my mind, which was true, that on Sunday people get dressed up, not to go to church, but to go to prison.

I thought Vernon was the story — from the outside in — you start out trying to find someone, a group of people you can sit with. I basically had four or five things I was doing at once. There were twin fifteen-year olds I was spending some time with, thinking that might be the story. There was Vernon [Sabrina Branch's father]. I met Vernon at this men's group for ex-cons, and one of the things he told me was that he was worried about his sister because, although she had succeeded and moved out to the suburbs, she was going out with an inmate. And he worried about his nephew. Then when I finally met his mother-in-law and the kids, it became clear that this was a great extended family that dealt with all of these things.

I thought Vernon was the story —

Vernon passing through, touching on people's lives. I sent in the story. I knew it wasn't right, but I couldn't figure out what wasn't right about it. And when Bill read it, he basically said, 'There's no journey in this story. It starts out in prison, he ends up back in prison. He meets all these people, but in the end he's not very sympathetic.' But he said, 'I could read 100 inches about Sabrina.' And he was right.

Turning the story inside out enabled us to focus on the story through the eyes of a ten-year old, which I think really broke down a lot of the barriers readers might have against it. Who wants to read about a thirty-year-old drug dealer? But a ten-year-old girl who reads *Goosebumps* books? — that was interesting.



**The Wall Street Journal's Jonathan Kaufman, right, wrote about the increased imprisonment of black men by telling the story of young Sabrina Branch, center, whose life is shadowed by prison walls. Sabrina, now 12, lives in Baltimore with Valmaree Williams, her grandmother.**

That was a way to ask, even if you think Vernon should be locked up, are we, as a society, doing right by his daughter? By having her grow up in this world where prison is all around her, and that's all that she sees?

**HOYT:** You set out to show something. Did you also discover some things?

**KAUFMAN:** I discovered that the problem of what can be done for neighborhoods like Sabrina's isn't as overwhelming as we thought. I don't leave Sabrina's community feeling this problem can never be fixed.

Basically we're talking about giving kids a good education, supporting them, giving them mentors, opening up opportunities, and treating them the way we

like to treat our own kids. Our inability to do that is devastating, for them and for us. I would like to find some way to unlock that idea in the readers. So that they put down the paper and, in some small way say, 'gee, you know, I never thought of it that way before.'

**HOYT:** You're a man on a mission?

**KAUFMAN:** Yeah, I guess I am. I tell these stories in part because I think, God, if we got all of these people in a room together, they could really learn from each other.

**HOYT:** Many journalists might have found Sabrina but perhaps not focused on the positive possibilities. We do a lot of stories about how bad things are.

**KAUFMAN:** As journalists we can get so focused on the worst cases, the pathological families and so forth. I thought that story had been done a lot, and I was very influenced by colleagues who are black who warned me not to do that. A very good friend of mine who's a black writer at the *Globe* said to me, I don't want your readers sitting in their living rooms going, 'Oh, well, there those people go again'.

I'm not sure I consciously thought this, but I think what drew me to Sabrina was that she was ordinary. She was not an overachiever. And she's not among the bad kids who you just know are going to get into really bad trouble. She's everybody else.

**HOYT:** You called searching for a Sabrina — for a way to tell these stories — a search for narrative. Is that how you think of it?

**KAUFMAN:** I don't think people will read these stories just because they are about an "important issue," these days. The story itself has to be intrinsically interesting. Maybe that's a function of people becoming tired of race, maybe it's a function of a Jerry Springer-Oprah Winfrey-ization of media. But I think people want a good story, a narrative. And then along the way they realize, 'Hey, I'm learning something about race as well.' You really have to grab people by the throat, by the heart. ■

## SHARON ROSENHAUSE:



# "Think Big, Be Patient"

**S**an Francisco is being recast — demographically, economically, culturally — by its increasing Asian presence and by other forces that you don't always see from a downtown office or the tourist bus. The San Francisco Examiner sought to measure and convey the changes in a massive project that it titled *The New City*. In 1998, the paper published nineteen major stories, ranging from an overview of changing demographics to a look at new games being played in the city's playgrounds. The series has continued in 1999. At the Columbia workshop, Sharon Rosenhouse, managing editor/news, explained how the project grew out of earlier changes at the paper. Excerpts:



I'm going to tell you about some choices and decisions we've made at the *San Francisco Examiner*. At the time we did the *New City* project, we had an editorial staff of 200. We have a major commitment to enterprise and to diversity in the newsroom and in content. Where we've been and where we are is critical to the journalism we do.

Ten years ago, minority staffers at the *Examiner* formed a caucus. They called themselves A Better Future for Molly. That would be Molly Solomon, now twelve, the daughter of reporter Annie Nakao. The caucus, in a scene that we know was repeated all over the country, was concerned about hiring

and promotion of people of color and about providing coverage that went beyond what our colleague Greg Lewis calls flashpoint journalism or the Negro of the Week Syndrome. The consensus then was that the *Examiner's* coverage did not reflect San Francisco.

The discussions included hiring goals (which were *not* set), covering neighborhoods, and mainstreaming coverage. A minority source list was developed. It was largely ignored. Within six months, the decision was made to go with race or ethnic or community beats as we call them. This was in 1990.

We started by covering the African-American, Latino, and Asian-American communities. Later, we added the gay and lesbian community and women's issues as a beat. You could be Asian and cover the Latino community or Anglo and cover the Asian community. There has never been a racial test in staffing, though language skills matter.

We recently sent a reporter to a seminar on under-covered communities. Everyone there wanted to know how she got stories into the paper on the gay and lesbian beat. Well, she said, I write the stories and they put them in the paper. When you have, as we do, four reporters on the community beats and they are among the most talented people in the newsroom, you create a self-fulfilling prophecy. They will do good work. You will play it prominently. And it will help you mold or even change the paper.

Some people worry that the community beats are PC. I worry more that they are a little soft, a little cheerleading. But how else would we have broken stories about a landlord literally holding Filipino

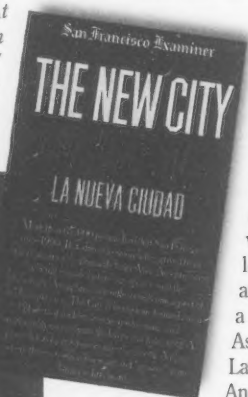
veterans captive so he could get their Social Security checks? Or the beloved African-American pastor who got his parishioners to take out second loans on their homes to finance what they thought was a new church building, when the funds seemed to mostly support the minister's rich life-style? Or the two lesbians who created a new kind of family — one woman by providing her egg, the other woman by carrying it? They then found a judge who approved an adoption, making both of them mothers of the baby boy.

When I joined the *Examiner* in 1992, the community beats were in place. Our newsroom had about 10 percent more staff than we do today. We didn't have much turnover so we really couldn't hire to make the newsroom look more like San Francisco — or speak its languages. Then in 1993, Hearst Newspapers, the *Examiner's* owner, got its first diversity director, a woman who wanted to make a difference. She required each newspaper to do a content audit. We were shocked by what our audit showed. Despite its two female managing editors and a newsroom that is about half female, most sources quoted in our paper were male. The images were overwhelmingly white and male.

**W**hile we had the community beats, we wanted to find ways to make more substantive changes. The Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, just across the bay in Oakland, had developed a program called Total Community Coverage. The idea was to get newsrooms to cover the total community. Hearst Newspapers sponsored a company-wide Total Community Coverage project at the *Examiner* in March 1994. After seminars, planning sessions, content analyses, and community meetings, forty-two journalists from twelve Hearst papers produced a twelve-page prototype newspaper that sought to 'get outside the box' in approach and in the content necessary for covering our multicultural community. It was a turning point for us, as twice as many staffers applied for the project than could participate.

It's hard to change coverage quickly, but it's not as hard to change images, so that is one of the things we concentrated on.

We were indeed changing the paper. We had some turnover and we made good hires, including reporters with language skills we'd never had. We were ready for the next phase, though we didn't quite know what it was. It started to





reveal itself in 1998 when we were, without naming it, conceiving *The New City*.

There had been a number of stories, seemingly unrelated, that added up to signs of fairly significant demographic change in our city. We began to talk about that. Everyone had evidence, from articles or from his or her own experiences, that there was a huge story in the remaking of San Francisco. Many of those who noticed were people who had covered or were covering the community beats. As we talked, we thought we could go after a major piece documenting these changes, without waiting for the year 2000 census. And we thought we could give the changes a human face.

The more we talked, the more excited we became. Things just came together. I had told Erna Smith, chair of the Journalism Department at San Francisco State University, about what we were trying to do, and she told me about a half dozen faculty members doing research on how the city is changing. Many of the professors would later talk to staff members, what would become *The New City* team, in a series of brown-bag tutorials.

Once the reporters began to report the outlines of the series, we heard about more work that was relevant. So we invited more people in. We talked with the San Francisco State University's Public Research Institute, and the director, after hearing our idea for *The New City*, told us it was the project he'd been waiting all of his career to work on.

From the start, we were ambitious. Assigning three reporters and a photographer (images were key to success of the series) was a huge commitment. We pitched the project to the Pew Center for Civic Journalism and got a grant for a trilingual poll that asked 700 city residents about a range of issues, from race relations to crime to religion.

We learned a great deal about our city and, in the end, so did our readers. We also learned that such a project is not a one-year-only effort, as this was conceived but, really, a story for the rest of our lives.

If you are thinking of such a project in your city, let me give you a tip: think big and be patient, because big takes time. We had talked about getting our initial story in the paper early in the year. The first piece — 175 inches on the city's vast demographic, economic, and political changes — didn't run until April 26. The wait about killed me, but the story was worth it. ■

## KAREN SAUNDERS:



# Telling 'Race Secrets'

### Q & A

*Karen Saunders, 43, sees the world through a slightly different lens. Two award-winning segments for 20/20 on black women's weight and hair are cases in point. The first, "Beautiful Bodies," documented and explored the fact that many black women prefer full, shapely figures — not the thin, sleek form that has become the white ideal. "Natural Beauty: Black Hair," dealt with black women's hard-to-manage hair — the tortuous procedures many women go through to straighten it. The piece also reported on the job discrimination they sometimes face if they choose to avoid straightening and wear the hair in braids. Both pieces scored well in the ratings race. Saunders spoke in New York with writer Nicholas Stein.*

**STEIN:** Tell me about the genesis of these two pieces.

**SAUNDERS:** Meredith White, a senior producer at 20/20, came across a study from the University of Arizona that indicated black women had a significantly different perception of their bodies than white women. We discussed it — and I said I



JOHN MARK SWOCK

Saunders

knew it to be the case. And she asked me if I wanted to do the story. The other part was that black women, though they didn't have angst about their bodies, did have angst about their hair — and it was a very serious thing for them. But it was more complicated than that. Because it's not just an issue of vanity, per se.

**STEIN:** What did you hope to accomplish with these race-and-lifestyle stories?

**SAUNDERS:** I hoped to elevate the general public's perception of other cultures — to illustrate how there are differences that are often looked upon as negative, stereotypical.

*Nicholas Stein is a former assistant editor at CJR.*

cal, something that is not the norm. I also hoped there would be a level of appreciation among black women for themselves, because they rarely see in the media the issues they are confronted with. The stories elevated people's perceptions of other people — so that this is not some mystery.

**STEIN:** These subjects are sometimes referred to as "race secrets" — small or large differences that are not often discussed. Have you ever come across story ideas like these that you didn't want to do?

**SAUNDERS:** I didn't want to talk about hair. It's not discussed. It was difficult on some levels for me to report, even



Queen-size performer Freddy Walker on 20/20

though I've worn my hair in some kind of natural fashion since I was fifteen. I think why they call things race secrets is a fear that anything that is not the "norm" can be twisted into something negative.

**STEIN:** There is a paradox to race secrets. The secret perpetuates the misunderstanding and discrimination.

**SAUNDERS:** And by telling the truth, by putting it out there, you enlighten.

**STEIN:** Tom Brokaw talks about being non-confrontational when reporting on race. How do you approach these stories?

**SAUNDERS:** Over the years, people have told me they talked to me because I don't approach them like a "story." I approach them as another person. I'll give people time to think about it. You can't push in on somebody. Treat people as human beings and it is more than likely that they will respond. ■

# UNITY '99: THE SEATTLE SCENE

*Soon after the three-day Columbia workshop on covering race and ethnicity ended on the East Coast, journalists began gathering on the West Coast, in Seattle, for a five-day conference called Unity '99. Four organizations — the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA), the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ), and the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) — met together for the second time (the first was in Atlanta, in 1994). Sheila Stainback, a past vice president of the NABJ and a free-lance anchor for Fox News Channel, took along a notebook for CJR.*

BY SHEILA STAINBACK

## ■ THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE

"I am an affirmative action baby," ABC News senior correspondent Carole Simpson declared in one workshop. And many of the more than 6,000 journalists at Unity '99 could say the same. The convention itself had nearly been derailed after the voters of Washington State last November approved Initiative 200, a bill that basically ended affirmative action programs in the state's public sector. Some Unity participants wanted to pick another site.

Yet, at a plenary session called "Balance or Bias: Affirmative Action and the News Media," the 3,000-seat convention hall was two-thirds empty. Up front, a nine-member panel made up of supporters and opponents of affirmative action as well as journalists, gave a report card on news coverage of the debates on affirmative action in both Washington state and California. Pretty interesting stuff. So where were all the "affirmative action babies?"

Some, suggested Donna Lacy Marshall, an African-American anchorwoman from WHAS-TV in Louisville, feel all talked out on the subject. "Just to keep talking about it and fussing about it and getting angry about it," she said, "isn't going to change how white America feels about it."

Others, like *Seattle Times* columnist Jerry Large, worried that people who have achieved sometimes forget those who may not be as successful as they

are. Large, who is African-American, did attend the session. "We're not at a point in our history," he said, "where we can afford to take too many breaks from these issues."

Was the panel an exercise in preaching to the choir? Kristina Heath, a Native American student journalist, theorized that people who deal with affirmative action issues "on a daily basis" might merely want to concentrate on other matters. After all, they could choose among some 250 other panels and workshops at Unity — from "Climbing the Magazine Ladder of Success" to "How to Apply Computer-Assisted Reporting to Mexico and Latin America."

## ■ OFF CAMERA, ON TRACK

If you were not looking for a job at Unity '99, you might have wished you were. Recruiters were everywhere, more than 300 of them looking for Mr. or Ms. Right. Just one example: Anzio Williams, 27, an executive producer for WLWT-TV in Cincinnati, was hotly pursued by at least half a dozen stations. "It's a good feeling," Williams said. Why is he so popular with the recruiters? Williams wants to do something in TV that few minority journalists have an interest in: he wishes to work behind the scenes.

According to TV recruiters, Anzio's off-camera goal makes him a minority within a minority. Most young minority-group members are aiming for on-camera jobs. "I think that continues to be a huge problem," said Mark Effron, vice president/news of the Post-Newsweek stations. Effron tells young journalists that not only are there more opportunities behind the scenes, but a news manager can have a greater impact than a reporter or anchor. Most white aspiring journalists also prefer being in front of the camera, Effron said. But: "There is no shortage of white news directors. There's not a lack of white producers."

## ■ WHO WILL STAY?

Minority-group journalists are in a good position to get into the business, but will they stay? The Freedom Forum released a survey at Unity of 457 newspaper journalists of color, and a quarter of them said they plan to leave newspapers with-

in the next five years. An overwhelming majority of those who might leave said that better pay and better hours might induce them to stay. Yet, curiously, an overwhelming 77 percent rated their chances for advancement on the job as "excellent" or "good." Fifty-nine percent said what could send them packing was "burnout."

## ■ THE POLITICIANS COME TO CALL

Unity '99 claimed it was not only the largest gathering of journalists of color in the world, but the largest gathering of journalists, period, in the world. So, not surprisingly, four presidential hopefuls came calling. Vice President Al Gore's session, "Race, Technology, and the Future of the United States," was the best attended of all Unity plenary sessions — at least while Gore was there. Though nearly 3,000 heard him speak, only scores remained an hour later, after the vice-president had departed. Former Senator Bill Bradley spoke about race and took a few questions.

On the Republican side Senator John McCain gave an impromptu afternoon speech and news conference. Governor George W. Bush of Texas, who had made headlines by first declining the Unity invitation though he was already in Seattle ("scheduling conflicts"), then scrambled to stop by and shake some hands. But no speech.

## ■ MEET TO THE BEAT

During the day, most of the journalists moved in groups of their own racial and ethnic background. In the evening there was more cross-cultural sampling, and journalists danced and partied to new sounds and dance moves. A graying white journalism professor, for example, earned the respect of the crowd at NABJ's "wild wild west" hip-hop party for vaguely but bravely trying to locate the beat as he contorted on the dance floor. There was even a combined salsa-kareoke night, co-sponsored by the Hispanic and Asian-American journalists. Vice President Gore got into the swing. "I'm known for my Meringue," he deadpanned. "Some people say it's like my Macarena, but they just don't know."

The closing celebration featured the Spinners, the 1970s soul group, and journalists of all colors seemed to know the words to their songs. It wasn't *We Are the World*, but close enough. ■

# COVERING THE UNFRIENDLY SKIES

*Media handling of the JFK Jr. crash raises yet again some important issues: Is aviation safety getting short shrift in the press except at moments of terrible tragedy? Are most reporters at disaster scenes knowledgeable enough to ask the right questions?*

BY MARIE TESSIER

**T**he July crash of John F. Kennedy Jr.'s private plane prompted the nation's news organizations to a sweeping wave of speculation about the possible causes — some of it well informed, much of it not.

"Analysts who talk right after a crash are people who don't have anything to do with the crash," says Don Phillips, aviation writer for *The Washington Post*. "They say things that are so preliminary that they can't possibly be true, and in the world of 24-hour news, something that gets reported once is repeated over and over again. Then it becomes holy writ by the end of the day."

ABC News correspondent Lisa Stark had the most informative story with an early piece that gave a more accurate reading of radar data than the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) first provided. Some accounts implied, incorrectly, that Kennedy had been given inaccurate weather forecasts, others falsely reported that a flight instructor was among the passengers.

When airplane disasters strike, inac-

*Marie Tessier is a Maine journalist and author of a forthcoming handbook from Investigative Reporters and Editors, Reporting Aircraft Safety: An Investigator's Guide.*



**An official studies the wreckage of American Airlines Flight 1420 at Little Rock in which eleven people died**

curacy and unfairness are the rule in deadline coverage, not the exception. "People in the aviation industry just laugh at us, and they have a right to," asserts Elizabeth A. Marchak, a reporter for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* who has spent recent years investigating aviation safety. "Reporters get it wrong a lot of the time."

Aviation is an industry that touches about 50 million travelers each year, that carries out day-to-day operations in every

major media market in the country. Yet few news organizations are doing regular reporting on safety issues. With crashes of commercial jets happening at a rate of about one each week worldwide, and air travel on course to double in about fifteen years, aviation is more than ever an important subject.

Too much aviation reporting is about ticket prices and corporate earnings, not enough about safety. "I'll bet there aren't even ten news organiza-

tions in the country that cover aviation safety in any depth," Marchak says. "Every time there's a bad crash we get this intense attention, and then the rest of the time, nothing." A week before the Kennedy tragedy, most news organizations gave just one day's play to a Government Accounting Office audit that criticized the Federal Aviation Administration for fundamental problems with a new inspection system for the nation's ten biggest passenger airlines.

AP WIDEWORLD/BETH A. KEISER

## REPORTING

Only a handful of journalists is well-versed in aviation safety. Officials of the NTSB call the regulars who show up at crash sites "the Seven Dwarfs," because those mainstays sit together in the front at crash scene briefings. They include aviation reporters from *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Dallas Morning News*, and ABC, CBS, and NBC. Most of those reporters handle a variety of other beats as well, and Eric Malnic of the *Los Angeles Times* spends much of his time editing on the night shift.

Bill Adair of the *St. Petersburg Times*'s Washington bureau commands similar respect when he goes to crash sites, and Marchak is widely regarded as the expert's expert on aviation safety issues.

under-reported and badly reported. "Aviation coverage is just hyperbole from beginning to end — hype, hype, hype, hype, hype," says *The Washington Post*'s Don Phillips, the acknowledged dean of aviation reporters. "It's not that the people who are out at a crash aren't trying to be accurate. They just don't know what they're doing."

Another factor is the NTSB's policy that limits the flow of information by releasing only facts the investigators can confirm — which is very little in the first twenty-four to thirty-six hours after a crash. That policy is outdated in today's around-the-clock news environment, Phillips says, because news organizations will be generating reports whether the facts are available or not. Aviation

*The Dallas Morning News*, also says the AP's practice is problematic. "One of the reasons my paper decided to concentrate on aviation safety was because we couldn't count on the AP to get the story," he says. "These bureau reporters show up at the crash scene asking which end of the airplane points into the wind."

The AP's Washington bureau chief, Sandy Johnson, defends the wire service's deadline coverage. "When a plane crashes or a tornado strikes or an earthquake happens, the AP is able to instantly deploy reporters to the scene," she says. "After a crash we're there through the entire investigation. After the first couple of weeks, AP is 95 percent of the coverage."

AP transportation writer Glen John-



**Acohido,**  
*The Seattle Times*



**Adair,**  
*St. Petersburg Times*



**Phillips,**  
*The Washington Post*



**Lunsford,**  
*The Dallas Morning News*



**Wald,**  
*The New York Times*



**Marchak,**  
*Cleveland's Plain Dealer*



**Stark,**  
*ABC News*

*The Seattle Times* aerospace team is widely respected; reporter Byron Acohido won a 1997 Pulitzer Prize for aviation beat reporting.

In recent years, Marchak has exposed the deep flaws in aviation regulation that came to light with the May 1996 crash of a ValuJet plane in the Everglades. A month before, Marchak had written a story about profound safety issues at the airline, even though ValuJet did not fly to Cleveland. Last January, she published a two-part series showing that accidents and incidents involving hazardous materials, which brought down the ValuJet plane, are increasing, despite the FAA's assertions that it is aggressively enforcing regulations.

Marchak also closely follows the safety inspection system highlighted in the July GAO report. "When you look at the documents, what it means is that the FAA can't properly inspect planes," she says. "Those are very important stories, and we need to have the guts and the gumption to follow them up, especially after a crash."

Other journalists covering aviation agree that safety issues are largely

reporters are unanimous in their view, however, that journalists need to do better homework before covering breaking aviation stories in order to avoid foolish mistakes such as calling a "spoiler" a "flap" (the former helps slow a plane down, the latter helps provide lift).

ABC News's Stark says that her job is complicated by having to explain to her news desk why other reporters' stories are wrong. "Half our job is reporting what the news is," she says. "The other half is rumor control."

The biggest hole in aviation safety reporting is the dearth of seasoned aviation reporters at the scene of crashes from core 24-hour news organizations like *The Associated Press*, CNN, and MSNBC. The AP sends bureau reporters to the scenes, instead of calling in its aviation reporter from Washington. He would know the value of radar records, for example, and would understand that a "sudden change in pressure" implied some kind of explosion. Says Marchak: "There is a huge vacuum out there, and it really shows after a crash. AP is only part of a very large problem."

J. Lynn Lunsford, aviation writer at

son, for example, was able to advance the story of the American Airlines Flight 1420 crash in Little Rock on June 1 with a report about possible problems with the plane's spoilers — a story he wrote from Washington while supplementing bureau coverage from the crash site in Little Rock.

With Lunsford's expertise and fourteen years experience covering aviation, though, it was not surprising that *The Dallas Morning News* achieved every major scoop about the investigation of Flight 1420, in which eleven passengers and crew died. The flight had originated at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, the nation's second busiest. On the first day of national newspaper reporting of the crash, Lunsford reported excerpts of the transcripts of conversations between the air traffic control tower in Little Rock and the American Airlines pilots flying the plane.

Lunsford wrote: "Excerpts of the control tower recordings read to the *News* show that the American flight crew knew a severe thunderstorm was heading toward them but were confident they could beat it to the airport.



"At 11:35 P.M., when Flight 1420 first contacted the Little Rock control tower, the controller informed the pilots that there were thunderstorms just northwest of the airport."

Later stories for the Dallas paper confirmed that the pilot decided to land when visibility was less than permitted by American's flight manual, and raised the issues of pilot fatigue, weather tracking equipment, and equipment malfunction — all factors that NTSB investigators say they are pursuing.

Dallas Morning News managing editor Stuart Wilk credits Lunsford's energy and enterprise for the paper's exceptional aviation safety coverage, and also that of airline business reporter Terry Maxon, whose work complements Lunsford's. Wilk says the importance of aviation in the Dallas area and a history of crashes there both play a part in the paper's depth of coverage. "We had two major airplane crashes here in recent memory, and that sensitizes a town and its newspaper to the importance of aviation safety," Wilk says, referring to two accidents in the 1980s that killed a total of 151 people. "We've had more that had a Dallas connection, and Little Rock is an example."

But the crash that "had bad journalism written all over it" — as *The Washington Post's* Phillips put it — was the 1996 explosion of TWA Flight 800 off New York's Long Island. "That was just the epitome of bad aviation coverage."

Widespread terrorism fears inflated the bomb theory in much of the media — a theory that since has largely been discarded. A month earlier, a truck bomb had killed U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. A few days after the crash, a bomb went off at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Newsweeklies and TV news magazines did special features on terrorism, portraying TWA 800 as part of a trend. But aviation specialists and aviation beat reporters knew full well that mechanical problems could have caused the jet to explode. The NTSB's probe is still going on, and investigators hope to assign a probable cause of the crash by early next year. The agency is pursuing only mechanical causes for the explosion at this time.

The bomb theory was very much alive, however, among aviation investigators in July and August of 1996. The vast majority of reporters on the scene became prey for what Phillips calls "competing leaks" from FBI criminal investi-

gators — authorities whose expertise is in crime, not aviation. Within a few weeks, Phillips wrote stories about possible mechanical causes of the explosion. *The Seattle Times's* Acohido outlined the way a 747's fuel tank could explode, just as it had on another 747 in mid-flight over Spain in the 1970s. The Seattle paper even recreated a diagram from a 1989 *Boeing Service Bulletin* that pointed to places where mechanics were to apply sealant to prevent fuel leaks and fires. "I found all kinds of stuff about problems with these fuel tanks," Acohido says.

Even as these stories were reported in prominent national competitors, *The New York Times* fueled public misunderstanding by overemphasizing the possibility of a bomb. Most other national news media followed that lead. On August 23, 1996, relying on unnamed sources, the paper went much further in portraying evidence of a bomb than on-the-record sources were willing to go. "After a prolonged, confounding search of the ocean floor, investigators have finally found scientific evidence that an explosive device was detonated inside the passenger cabin of TWA Flight 800, senior federal officials said yesterday," reporter Don Van Natta Jr. wrote.

The story detailed the type of explosive residue that was found, and emphasized that the evidence met "the FBI's previously stated standard for declaring that the plane was brought down by a criminal act," even as it quoted FBI investigators trying to minimize the importance of the find. A chart on an inside page compared the loss of 230 lives to mass killings such as the 1995 bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building and the 1990 fire at the Happy Land Social Club in the Bronx where eighty-seven died. "Every reporter has stories that they wish they could do over again, and this is one of those stories," *New York Times* Washington bureau chief Michael Oreskes says. "We went too far down the road of a bomb theory."

FBI investigators later discovered that the plane had been used to train bomb-sniffing dogs. It was a scenario that gave plausible explanation for why explosive residue could be present while bomb "shock waves" would be absent at the site of the explosion.

In a recently published book, *In the Blink of an Eye: The FBI Investigation of TWA Flight 800*, AP reporter Pat Milton details lead FBI investigator James Kall-

strom's efforts to play down the significance of the find. Milton writes: "Grimly, Kallstrom confirmed off the record that traces had been found, but cautioned that they might not indicate a bomb, and so a story alleging that the FBI had evidence of a bomb would not be merely premature — it might be wrong."

She goes on: "The reporter was unpersuaded. So were the editors of the [New York] Times whom Kallstrom called next. To publish the story would be to rush to judgment, he advised . . . The story would unnecessarily alarm the public, and it would confuse the victims' families, who would think the FBI had been holding out on them, when all it was trying to do was pin down the facts before publicizing them. But the editors had made a decision: Tangible evidence that suggested a plastic explosive as the cause of Flight 800's crash was front-page news. They had a responsibility, as they observed, to inform the public."

Matthew L. Wald, the *Times* aviation writer, says that FBI investigators persisted in calling the crash site a "crime scene," even as they refused to classify the explosion as a crime. "We either listened to the wrong people, or we listened to the right people saying the wrong thing. As a result, we went down the wrong alley."

The beginning of a cure for uninformed aviation safety reporting is as close as the local airport, aviation reporters and safety officials say. "If you have an airport in your community, then there are stories to be done," says *The Dallas Morning News's* Lunsford. "Aviation is one of the truly global issues, and it affects just about everybody."

With journalists and their audiences flying more than ever, aviation is ripe for investigative reporting. Every airport has a local governing board; every airport has a disaster plan with local police and fire officials; and every airport has a relationship with FAA inspectors, who leave a paper trail wherever they go. Airlines and aviation unions also provide a rich field for source development — few people know more and care more about safety than air traffic controllers, pilots, mechanics, and flight attendants.

If one reporter in every state began writing aviation stories, the next time a plane falls out of the sky, aviation officials would have to answer questions from a lot more journalists than the Seven Dwarfs. ■

# USING CHILDREN AS SOURCES

## *Dilemmas for Journalists*

BY ELIZABETH STONE

**T**oday it's the strained face of a child in Kosovo, yesterday the troubled face of a teenager in Littleton, and tomorrow — who knows? With more breaking news as well as news features in which children are sources or subjects, we are thinking harder about kids than we have since Janet Cooke returned a Pulitzer Prize because she invented an 8-year-old heroin addict named Jimmy.

That story prompted a controversy about whether reporters should intervene in the lives of endangered children. Now the debate centers on whether in the course of their work reporters themselves might harm children. "There is a new conversation going on in newsrooms after Littleton, after the wave of bomb threats across America and with the steady drumbeat of disturbing juvenile cases," says Al Tompkins, who writes about ethics for the Poynter Institute for Media Studies. "Juveniles" — commonly those under 18 — "are less off-limits to journalists than they were a decade ago. It's time to talk about that."

Among the questions: Should journalists interview children after they've been involved in a tragic or traumatic event? What about when kids are witnesses to a crime or to violence or trauma? Or even charged with a crime? And how reliable

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are they as sources, anyhow? Adults suddenly thrust into the limelight are often unprepared for what may follow, so don't children need even more protection in order not to jeopardize their rights to privacy, or harm themselves or others, emotionally or legally?

No research exists to guide us, but if there is any consensus, it's that tight deadlines hardly encourage deeply considered decisions. "I don't know that you have the luxury of nuance when you're writing under deadline," says Lisa Belkin, a contributor to *The New York Times Mag-*

### WHO SHOULD BE HEARD? UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS? AND OF WHAT AGE?

*azine.* But in the less pressed atmosphere of writing her book, *Show Me a Hero*, on housing desegregation in Yonkers, New York, she chose several times to eliminate material — for example, the statement in an interview that a child featured in the book was the product of an unwanted pregnancy — that might bring unnecessarily painful knowledge to the children spoken to or spoken of.

Invariably, there is the conflict all journalists face between serving a child's best interests and doing the best possible story. Abra Potkin, a producer for CBS's *48 Hours* who specializes in features about young people from preteen to late teen says, "In the end, I have the obliga-

tion to tell the truth, and that supersedes what may be the wish to protect." Tompkins of the Poynter Institute agrees: "We do not start with minimizing harm. We must first consider our journalistic mission." On the other hand, Anne Gudenkauf, a senior editor at National Public Radio, believes, "Our obligation to protect the children is a higher obligation than our obligation to report stories."

Legally, there are few prohibitions on using children as sources in breaking news. "The bottom line is that there is no bottom line," says Jane E. Kirtley, the executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. "The law is constantly developing." No laws prohibit using the names, words, or images of children who have consented to be interviewed in a public space about breaking news, even without their parents' permission.

In cases of children involved with the courts — whether the issue is about custody, abuse, divorce, or a crime — the terrain is more charted. Some court records are confidential, but reporters are free to use material that they have obtained legally. Increasingly, children who commit serious crimes are tried as adults, and when they are, journalists are free to write about them. Soon after the killings or injuries in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Pearl, Mississippi; Springfield, Oregon; Paducah, Kentucky; Littleton, Colorado; and Conyers, Georgia, everyone in America knew the names of the boys with the guns. One of them was 11.

Many news organizations and their reporters impose their own restraints. During the sixteen years he covered local news for various TV stations and the eighteen years after that he worked in national news at CNN, Earl Casey, now a CNN spokesman, developed a list of half a dozen factors to consider when deciding whether or not to interview children for breaking news. These include their age and maturity, the degree of violence involved, the child's connection to any victims, the presence of parental permission, whether the footage is live or taped. "A five-year-old

in a tornado we might interview on tape," he says of his own past practice at CNN as well as the network's current practice. "Live? Probably not. A kid whose parent is shot? Likely not interview that child at all," regardless of age. "If the child is a witness and has information about the news event, we consider it permissible, though not preferable, to interview without parental permission. Every case is individual."

No organization stipulates an age at which a child becomes a reliable source, but when hard pressed, Casey says that for him, 14 is a kind of "unofficial break-water" as long as maturity and the other variables are considered. Psychologist Scott Poland, president-elect of the National Emergency Assistance Team of the National Association of School Psychologists, who led crisis teams after the shootings in Littleton, Paducah, and Jonesboro, suggests 13 as a rough dividing line.

Recently, Poynter's Tompkins posted "Guidelines for Interviewing Juveniles" on the institute's Web site. Along with



On 48 Hours, a high-school sophomore tells Paula Zahn about her sexual harassment suit

some provocative questions journalists might ask themselves, he made three explicit suggestions: kids should be given greater privacy protection than adults, TV reporters have a special burden in interviewing kids because the footage is difficult to control and edit, and journalists who have determined that parental consent is not necessary should leave a business card with the child so the parents have a way of making contact if they are opposed to the interview being used. Tompkins himself has given children his card to pass along to their parents when he thought their explanation of his conversation with them might be lacking and the parents might want to call him themselves.

Among large news organizations,

CNN is unusual in the explicitness of its policy on the kinds of questions children should, or should not, be asked, and the circumstances under which they can be interviewed at all. To begin with, reporters must make sure the children are safe and away from the news scene. Reporters are further instructed to avoid a "highly inquisitive or investigative style" and focus instead on "opened" questions.

CNN's distinction between simply asking kids what they saw and putting them on the spot is crucial in situations in which children are victims. After Andrew Golden, then 11, and Mitchell Johnson, then 13, opened fire on their middle school classmates in Jonesboro, a TV reporter asked two students not only what they had seen of the boys' earlier behavior but why they hadn't reported it to the principal.

"To me that is where the media overstepped their boundaries, because the question suggested to the children that they did wrong by not telling," says



Richard Lieberman, of the National Organization of Victims Assistance, who counseled students in Jonesboro, including the two so pointedly questioned by the reporter. "These kids were consumed with guilt and shame, more so than the others. They had been given the idea that they should've done something."

The damage of an accusing question may be intensified by its public airing. Says Poland, who has written of his counseling experiences in the aftermath of school shootings in *Coping With Crisis: Lessons Learned*: "Can you imagine — I'm 14 or 16 and you get me to admit that I knew something and didn't do anything about it, and now the whole world knows?" For children publicly exposed in this way by the media, "There is public

embarrassment, people trying to hold them responsible, guilt, and a second-guessing they will probably do for the rest of their lives."

When children have faced an experience they couldn't escape, facing a question they can't evade intensifies their feelings of powerlessness. "As an adult, if I go on national television to tell my story, I know what that's going to mean," says Poland. "I understand that I'm losing my privacy and that people are going to recognize me. But I also know how to redirect a question I don't want to answer. We need to stop putting victims and survivors on TV immediately after tragedies."

Richard Wald, a consultant and former vice president of ABC News who is now the Fred W. Friendly Professor of Media and Society at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, relies on children only for their emotional responses, not for factual information. "When it comes to refugees, tornadoes, and so on, we don't interview the child, except for the emotion. We don't accept children as primary sources because children below 10 still have lingering fantasies. Who knows what they'll say? And therefore you have a responsibility not to make permanent their passing words. I got smart late," he adds, explaining that he learned the limits of children's credibility the hard way from the McMartin case of the 1980s, in which testimony of sexual abuse from California preschoolers, later discredited, left the lives of the school's owners and staff in ruins. Subsequent research has indicated that questions themselves can help create false memories in very young children

"Kids were saying things that seemed weird and impossible," says Wald, "and like everybody else, we accepted that this was in the realm of the possible. I was disappointed in myself because of the damage those exchanges did to the kids. It made them party to a false accusation, and now they have to live with that."

One of the biggest areas of concern is how to protect children from a reporter's own skill at eliciting information, especially when Telling All may damage the child personally, publicly, legally, or in relation to parents and peers. Many reporters have come up with strategies to protect the children they interview, especially when it's a relationship that continues over time.

"I always made sure my notebook was out because I always wanted to remind them I was a reporter. But the truth is I

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## REPORTING

spent so much time with them, I probably could've talked them into letting me use just about anything." So says Alex Kotlowitz of the two pre-adolescent brothers, Pharoah and Lafayette, whom he got to know while doing an article about families living in a Chicago public housing project for *The Wall Street Journal* and later featured in his book, *There Are No Children Here*.

**E**llen Pall, who tagged along with teenage students making video diaries while she was researching an article she wrote for *The New York Times Education Supplement*, was even more pointed in warning them against herself. "I sat down and told them explicitly, 'I'm here as a writer for a newspaper and not as your friend although I will try and make you think I'm your friend. I'm following you hoping you'll say something revealing, but if you do, you have the right to say Don't print that.'"

"I don't normally do this, but I promised them that before I sent the story to the editor I would let them know any fact about them individually that was going to appear. And they could tell me then that it was off the record.

"Kids don't have an even playing field about this," says Pall. "I write about creative people a lot. Most of them are getting something out of the process — recognition or publicity — so they're willing to trade off some of their control for the enhancement of their careers. But the kids weren't going to get anything out of it that I could see."

Despite all Pall's warnings, one teenage girl couldn't, or wouldn't, protect herself. "She was willing to be identified in the *Times* article as having had a promiscuous sexual history, and I could see that at least within the class, everyone would know it was she. She said, 'That's OK,' and I said, 'I don't think that's okay,' and I didn't use it."

Not everyone offers children the latitude Pall does. "Show kids quotes?" asks Howard Chua-Eoan, an assistant managing editor at *Time*. "Unless it's a particular situation, our policy in general is not to show copy to anyone. But if we think a kid doesn't know the implications of what he or she has said, we'll delete it entirely, though we also do this for some subjects who are not public figures."

Abra Potkin, a producer for CBS's *48 Hours*, does not show footage to child subjects in advance, but will negotiate turning the cameras off for specific

moments. For a documentary on a teenage boy going through the juvenile justice system, she obliged his wish that cameras not follow him into the institutional shower. On occasion, she will agree not to use footage that has already been shot. When minors are the subjects, she will blur their faces at a parent or guardian's request.

At her own initiative, Dale Russakoff, a national correspondent for *The Washington Post*, selectively used the print equivalent of blurring after interviewing an elementary school class for her story on the closing of a large Pennsylvania steel mill and its impact on local families. Children spoke to her candidly about many things, including parental fights at home, obviously unaware of the implications. "To the extent that the boys and girls talked about their own feelings, I used that," says Russakoff. "What would upset the parents, I used but disguised. It wasn't important to my readers to know which kid said what about her parents. It was important to show that this change had taken away the stability in their families."

What if a child wants information concealed from a parent? "I remember one story we did about how much kids today really do know about sex," says Chua-Eoan of *Time*. "We brought three boys in to interview — they were 11 or 12. We had the permission of their mothers, who were sitting right outside the room. The mothers didn't want their kids' names used, and the kids didn't want their mothers to know who said what about sex." It all worked out, as it did for a teenager featured on *48 Hours* discussing her own sexual experiences in connection with a rape charge. There was mention of one encounter the teenager wanted eliminated. "She said her parents couldn't know about it," says Potkin, "and we respected that."

On occasion, children's openness could create legal problems for themselves or someone close to them. Vicky Que, who covers children's health and development for National Public Radio, once interviewed a child of 8 who told her his father used drugs, though the story she was doing had nothing to do with drugs. "I just simply sat him down and said 'You should never tell something like that to someone like me.' You have to advocate for the child."

Even parental consent doesn't always eliminate Que's role as advocate. "I once

interviewed a mother and her adolescent child," recalls Que. "The mother had used marijuana thirty years ago, and her son was using it now. She told me I could use her name and her son's. Call me stupid, but I could not bring myself to use their last names. The boy was a minor and clearly he could have gotten into trouble. My policy in this? I have to be able to sleep at night."

Children who witness a crime also may not understand that their comments to a reporter could bring legal trouble to someone else. Hunter George, now executive editor at *The Birmingham News*, recalls a story he oversaw at *The Ledger* in Lakeland, Florida. "Three teenage girls died in what appeared to be a one-car crash. We had a quote from a 15-year-old girl who said she was a witness, and it turned out there was an older youth involved, an 18-year-old who had challenged the girls to a drag race. We had a discussion about whether to use the girl's quote, not because she was 15 but because of the significance of the remark for the 18-year-old. Our conclusion was it was a significant story, she was an eyewitness, and she was going to tell the police anyway."

**O**f course, there isn't always time for discussion. So what's a journalist to do? Al Tompkins has his own golden rule for interviewing children — "Do unto other people's kids as you would have them do unto your kids." That's a good solution for journalists who would be comfortable having their children approached by a reporter. But many of the journalists questioned on this subject say they would never let their child be interviewed, and the rest say any interviewing would have to be done in their presence. And yet, as Richard Wald points out, there is much to lose if we decide children should not be seen or heard. "We did a *Nightline* recently on Jonesboro and Littleton," he says. "The testimony of the kids in the face of tragedy was restrained and dignified and powerful. Children are entitled to make testimony and we should listen."

Which child should be heard? And under what conditions? And of what age? Overly elaborate instructions as to how to proceed in interviewing children are probably as much a mistake as no guidelines at all. The best approach is for journalists to familiarize themselves with the factors they ought to be looking at well before the next crisis comes, as it surely will. ■



# WITNESSES FOR THE PROSECUTION

*Should journalists testify before war crimes tribunals about atrocities they've covered, or would that undermine their objectivity, and cast them as intelligence agents rather than neutral observers?*

BY S. AUSTIN MERRILL

**E**arly in the year 2000, Bill Berkeley, an American journalist, will sit before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania, as a witness in the war crimes trials of two of the alleged masterminds behind the Rwandan genocide. He will be asked to recount information he gathered from and about those men while reporting for *The New Republic* and *The Washington Post Magazine* — information crucial to establishing the chain of command linking them to the grisly acts of mass murder, rape, and torture that enveloped the country in early 1994 as a direct result of their orders. In testifying, Berkeley will do what journalists usually don't do: act as a judicial witness instead of a public observer.

"If you were asked to testify against Himmler and Goebbels, having actually witnessed Auschwitz, certainly you'd think about it," says Berkeley, who lived and worked in Rwanda during the genocide of 1994. His decision to testify is a controversial one. The objectivity journalists strive for normally mandates that they not act in ways that could be construed as taking an activist role. Ultimately, Berkeley decided that his obligation as a witness to atrocities outweighed his responsibility

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Kosovar women at a funeral in July mourn the deaths of 64 people found in mass graves

as a neutral and objective reporter. "I think it's important to remember that the crime in Rwanda is every bit as serious as the crime in Germany."

His may be a decision more and more journalists will have to make.

As the international community sifts through the rubble of the war in Kosovo, the brutality of ethnic cleansing, and mass executions, crimes against humanity are once again front-page news. Armed with notebooks, cameras, and laptops, journalists have, since the end of the NATO bombing campaign, been busy confirming the horrors that for weeks had existed only in the testimony of the Kosovar Alba-

nians. Already burdened by its load of cases from the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague is preparing to try those accused of war crimes in Kosovo.

In the past, the ICTY has not shied away from seeking testimony from journalists. Recognizing their capacity to gather large amounts of incriminating information, the ICTY and its sister institution for Rwanda have included journalists on their witness wish lists several times. While opinions vary on whether journalists should be asked to shed their cloak of neutrality to serve as judicial eyewitnesses in the prose-

## ISSUES

cution of war criminals, Richard Goldstone, the chief prosecutor for the ICTY and ICTR from 1994 to 1996, believes doing so sets a dangerous precedent.

"If reporters become identified as would-be witnesses, their safety and future ability to be present at a field of battle will be compromised," writes Goldstone in the recently released book *Crimes of War*, edited by Roy Gutman and David Rieff. "In my opinion the law takes too little account of that reality. I would therefore support a rule of law to protect journalists from becoming unwilling witnesses in situations that would place them or their colleagues in future jeopardy."

**G**oldstone's is an opinion shared by many editors who are reluctant to allow their correspondents' involvement in the judiciary process. Testifying at war crimes trials, they worry, would compromise reporters' integrity, and perhaps cast them as suspected intelligence agents.

Philip Bennett, assistant managing editor for foreign news at *The Washington Post*, agrees. "We believe in journalism as a medium for laying out the facts of a story," says Bennett. "That's what we've tried to do in Kosovo, that's what

we tried to do in Bosnia and Rwanda. When you use journalists' work outside of journalism, you introduce a series of questions that I think can be difficult."

Neither *The Washington Post* nor *The New York Times* has an official policy concerning journalists testifying before war crimes tribunals, but both Bennett and Stephen Engelberg, assistant managing editor at the *Times*, say their papers would resist doing so, while acknowledging the issue is murky.

Says Engelberg: "If we are seen as the auxiliary arm of prosecutors, it becomes problematic. But if there is no other way to get some criminal, then editors are going to have to really think hard and weigh things, as we already do."

While he concedes that the crimes before the ICTY and ICTR are more "epic" than traditional criminal activity, the *Post's* Bennett feels that essentially the same principle applies internationally that would affect a metro reporter covering a crime in the United States.

That's a sentiment echoed by Paul Tash, executive editor of the *St. Petersburg Times* in Florida and chair of the Freedom of Information Committee for the American Society of Newspaper Editors. "The

scenario strikes me as analogous to the kinds of subpoenas journalists get all the time in both civil and criminal cases within the United States," says Tash. "In general I think those efforts to co-opt and coerce journalists to become witnesses in proceedings undermine our independent role. Journalists should try to keep themselves as observers in the process rather than participants in it." But he adds a caveat: "I would say that in an extremely rare and compelling case, a reporter's or photographer's obligation as a citizen may outweigh the desire to preserve our independence from the judicial process. But those cases are extremely rare, and the circumstances must be compelling."

What, then, constitutes compelling circumstances? The statutes of the ICTY and ICTR mandate that those courts try people accused of genocide and crimes against humanity — certainly not ordinary crimes. Such atrocities are more commonplace today than ever. Ethnic conflict like that in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia has been on the rise since the end of the cold war, and as journalists continue to cover these struggles, the question of whether reporters should be compelled to testify about them will

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become increasingly contentious. Journalists need to cover these barbarities objectively but never ignore the international community's larger mission to punish war criminals.

Testifying is "an opportunity for me, not a duty," says Berkeley, contemplating his forthcoming date with the ICTR. "I've been told I have a unique contribution to make, and anything I can do to facilitate justice, I want to do." He cites the willingness of other journalists to testify as an encouraging factor in his own decision. One such reporter is Ed Vulliamy, who covered the war in Bosnia for the British weekly the *Guardian* from 1992 to 1996. The first print journalist to discover the Serbian concentration camps in Omarska, Vulliamy won numerous accolades for his reporting, including the International Reporter of the Year award in 1993 and 1994. In 1996, Vulliamy agreed to testify for the ICTY to help bring Milan Kovacevic and Dusko Tadic to justice.

"There are times in history when neutrality is not neutral. It's complicit to what's going on," says Vulliamy. "Omarska was not neutral. Concentration camps are not neutral. To me, neutrality between camp inmate and guard is insid-

ious. Neutrality between a raped woman and the beast who rapes her is not neutral, it is to side with the rapist. My neutrality's gone out the window long ago — morally, personally, professionally, and now legally as well."

**T**om Gjelten of National Public Radio sees Vulliamy's decision as European-style journalism. "In Europe, Ed's testifying is mainstream. If I were in Europe, I'd have done the same thing," Gjelten says. "For American journalists, it's not that simple. My editors wouldn't have let me get away with it."

Roy Gutman, a Pulitzer winner for his reporting on the war in Bosnia for *Newsday*, was also asked to testify before the ICTY, but left the decision to his editors. They refused to allow it. He doesn't criticize anyone for testifying; his view is that if he knew facts necessary for conviction, he would appear before the court. It wasn't clear, however, that information to which he was privy was essential. "It's unfortunate," says Gutman, "that the United Nations tribunals have their own interests and use journalists for their own purposes."

Chris McGreal, the Africa correspondent for the *Guardian*, was with Berke-

ley in Rwanda during the genocide, and testified before the ICTR in February 1998. His editor did not contest his willingness to cooperate with the ICTR. "I wrote articles criticizing the failure of various governments and international organizations to respond to the genocide," says McGreal. "It would be hypocritical of me then to say I was not prepared to make a stand for justice over what I considered an enormous crime."

Undoubtedly this is a difficult issue. The reporting that journalists do on crimes of war is essential to the world's knowledge of these horrors. Indeed, the work of the media played no small role in the creation of the ICTY and ICTR, as public outcry resulting from front-page stories and pictures of atrocities sparked international political action to seek justice.

But does the role of journalists stop there? Should they be compelled to serve as judicial witnesses as well?

"It's hard to be a purist about this," says McGreal. "Imagine a situation where a reporter was the only witness to the planting of the Oklahoma bomb. How many American newspapers would say he should not testify if that allowed the bomber to walk free?" ■

## Arts and Cultural Journalism Fellowships at Columbia University

Supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Arts Journalism Program offers fellowships to mid-career and senior journalists specializing in arts and culture.

The program is based at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in association with the School of the Arts.

NAJP Mid-Career Fellows spend an academic year at Columbia, engaged in a blend of academic study and work with arts organizations. They receive a stipend of \$35,000 plus tuition. NAJP Senior Fellows are offered stipends of \$10,000 per month for a portion of the academic year.

At Columbia, the NAJP brings together current and former fellows, senior executives of news organizations and leaders in the fields of arts and culture in discussions and conferences on topics of mutual interest.

The successful NAJP mid-career applicant must be a working critic, reporter or editor with at least five years of experience and a demonstrated dedication to arts and cultural journalism. He or she must have the potential to make a lasting contribution to the national discourse on arts and culture. Senior fellows must have achieved singular and measurable distinction in a field of arts or cultural journalism.

**Application deadline for 2000–2001 fellowships: February 1, 2000.**

**For more information or applications:**

**Phone: 212.854.1912**

**E-mail: najp@columbia.edu**

**Web: www.najp.org**

**National Arts**

**Journalism Program**

**najp**

## 1999–2000 NAJP Fellows

### Senior Fellows

**Kennedy Fraser** Journalist and essayist

**Charles Kaiser** Author and journalist

**Michael Kimmelman** Chief art critic, *The New York Times*

### Mid-Career Fellows

**Gina Arnold** Freelance rock critic (San Francisco)

**Timothy Cahill** Fine arts writer, *Times Union* (Albany)

**Peter Clowney** Arts and culture reporter, WHYY-FM (Philadelphia)

**Tony Green** Editor-at-large, *Blaze*

**Brandon Griggs** Book editor and staff writer, *The Salt Lake Tribune*

**John Habich** Fine arts editor, *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis & St. Paul)

**Reena Jana** Freelance visual arts critic and reporter (San Francisco)

**Louisa Kamps** Contributing writer, *Elle* and *Mirabella*

**Daniel Pinchbeck** New York correspondent, *The Art Newspaper*, Editor, *Open City*

**Jerome Weeks** Book columnist, *The Dallas Morning News*



# C O V E R I N G MONEY & POLITICS

## *Getting Inside the Issue of Campaign Finance*

*American politics is leaving the twentieth century the same way it entered — as the politics of money. Post-Watergate reforms have crumbled, while fund-raising has shot skyward in recent election cycles. The two major parties, for example, raised \$218.5 million for the '92 elections — and \$516.4 million for '96. Political players have devised a maze of new techniques for soliciting and deploying funds. The quest for cash has become ceaseless. Fund-raising is openly factored into the governing process.*

*How do we cover these complex developments in a compelling and knowledgeable way? How do we find*

*out who gave what to whom, and then explain what it means? How do we convey the reform debate?*

*This CJR resource guide is aimed at reporters, producers, editors, editorial writers, and others who cover money and politics regularly as well as those who will increasingly dip into the subject as the election season gears up. The guide has three purposes: First, to explain the basic practices and rules of political money. Second, to suggest fresh approaches to covering both political money stories and the battles over campaign-finance reform. And third, to provide enough sources and resources to help launch some good stories.*

BY PETER OVERBY

### HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

**I**n Hollywood's version of money in politics, an industry or interest gives a lot of money to a lawmaker, who proceeds to do sweet things legislatively for it. If the system actually worked that way, reporting it would be easy.

More likely, lawmaker and industry have a long-standing relationship, with money as an essential lubricant. Maybe the industry employs a lot of the lawmaker's constituents, or the lawmaker sits on a legislative committee that sets policy for the industry. Government now pokes into virtually every economic interest, from soup (food-safety pro-

grams) to nuts (the Fastener Quality Act Amendments Act of 1999). And more than ever, politicians need money to keep their careers going. It's the reporter's task to dissect these relationships, and to try to explain money's role.

So to start, some basics: Political money is ostensibly divided between the dollars that are regulated and those that are not. In federal campaigns, the regulated dollars are called "hard money" — that is, money raised and spent by candidates, party committees, and political action committees (PACs) under the limits and rules of federal campaign finance laws. The unregulated dollars are "soft money" — money raised without restrictions by party committees (from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals) but supposedly not used directly to benefit specific candidates. Though unlimited,

soft-money contributions are publicly reported. (Just to muddle things, "soft money" is sometimes used to describe money even farther outside the regulated system; for example, the *unreported* funds that tax-exempt organizations spend to run "issue" ads or voter drives during an election campaign.)

That said, the rules have become so weak, the fund-raising so relentless, that the line between hard and soft money barely matters anymore. In the 1996 campaign, both parties undermined the system. If the laws weren't broken they were certainly stretched. Since the rules were strained but nobody was punished, this pattern seems set for 2000.

In reporting on how the system really

*Peter Overby has covered money and politics for National Public Radio for five years.*



works, think pyramid. The candidate or committee assembles networks of people who pledge to raise a set amount, from a quarter of a million dollars or so, down to perhaps \$5,000. Each level of "raisers" typically gets the money from business associates — people who can't say no. At fund-raising dinners, all of those "hosts," "chairs," "co-chairs," et al. are people who raised or gave different amounts, with access and seating commensurate with the different "tiers." The printed program is a valuable document for identifying a politician's financial patrons.

**From the politician's side,** the pyramid is formed this way: incumbent lawmakers usually have a steering committee to manage fund-raising; this committee probably includes lobbyists who do business with the lawmaker's legislative committee. The steering committee members, in turn, put together ad-hoc groups who find individual "raisers" to bring paying guests to events. (See Campaign-Trail Money, page 40.)

Parties, meanwhile, both Democratic and Republican, tend to organize big donors into affinity groups, usually around business issues. Membership fees can run to \$250,000 and higher. Big donors get access to legislative leaders, sometimes at a small reception before a rubber-chicken dinner, or maybe at a golf outing or at a ritzy resort for the weekend.

Small donors count more for candidates than for parties. You might hear party operatives brag that their average contribution is less than, say, \$100. It sounds like politics as it ought to be. But

while small donors' hard money may be more valuable, since hard money can be spent to directly benefit a candidate, it's easier and cheaper to go after big soft-money checks. In 1996, the Republican National Committee projected almost identical amounts from Team 100 — the several dozen mostly corporate donors in its \$100,000 tier — as it did from its entire small-donor operation.

Finally, politicians are becoming donors themselves. An increasing number of officeholders has their own "leadership PACs," funneling interest-group money to other candidates and building obligations in the process. This can put donors in a bind; some complain that they give money to one politician and then see him or her pass it along to someone else — without giving them credit.

**From the donor's side,** you'll find different considerations — both financial and ideological.

■ Since 1974, donations from individuals have been capped at \$1,000 per candidate per election in the hard-money portion of the federal system. The amount has never been adjusted for inflation, so it's tough to cause a splash with individual contributions. Their impact can be boosted with bundling, the technique of collecting lots of small checks and giving them in a bundle to the politician. Bundling was pioneered by groups like EMILY's List (Early Money Is Like Yeast), a PAC promoting pro-abortion-rights women; but bundling is also used by law firms and lobbyists with less ideological motives.

## IS IT A CAMPAIGN SPOT OR AN "ISSUE" AD?

Wonder where that unregulated soft money goes? A lot of it flows into "issue" ads. By law, issue ads aren't supposed to call for the election or defeat of a candidate. But as this partial script for a 1996 DNC TV ad shows, the law doesn't mean much:

The Oval Office. If Dole sits here and Gingrich runs Congress, what could happen? Medicare: slashed. Women's right to choose: gone. Education: school drug programs cut. And a risky 550 billion-dollar plan balloons the deficit, raises interest rates, hurts the economy. President Clinton says balance the budget, cut taxes for families' college tuition, stand up to Dole and Gingrich . . .

The Clinton-Gore campaign ran this as a regular campaign spot — financed with hard money — while the DNC broadcast it as an issue ad — financed with soft money. Watch for party committees to air issue ads to attack an opposing candidate with charges too hot to be linked directly to their own candidates. Labor unions, business coalitions, tax-exempt organizations, and other independent groups also run issue ads. Check to see if an "independent" group is getting soft-money contributions from a party committee to finance its issue ads. The RNC did this in 1996, using tax-exempt groups to put out its partisan message.

## BY THE NUMBERS Who Can Give What

■ Maximum contribution to a candidate from one person, per primary or general election: \$1,000

■ Maximum contribution to a candidate from a political action committee, per primary or general election: \$5,000

■ Overall limit per year on contributions by one person to all federal candidates and committees, Hard money: \$25,000; Soft money: no limit

■ Maximum contribution from a corporation or union to a candidate, Hard money: \$0; Soft money: no limit

■ Soft-money contributions to national party committees:

— 1994 elections: \$101,666,223  
— 1998 elections: \$224,427,043

■ Total political action committees:  
— 1994: 3,954  
— 1999: 3,778

■ PACs can be created by corporations, unions, trade associations, and other organizations. A PAC raises money from its members or corporate management, and doles out the contributions to candidates and parties. PACs are limited to \$10,000 per candidate for an election cycle (primary and general elections) — still small change nowadays. Since candidates can take PAC money but not soft money, some entities — notably unions — use both. Disclosure rules mean the PAC donations are more easily identified than soft money, though they're often only part of the story.

■ Soft money is where the big contributions are found. It can come from a corporate or union treasury or a rich person's checking account. Parties must report their soft money but the sky is the limit, and there's a money race under way. The biggest contributions usually have run in the \$250,000 range, but both parties are pushing even that. The smaller soft-money checks tend to be given for business reasons; the larger amounts are sometimes more ideological. But if your local industry is contributing a large amount, you can be sure there's a powerful reason.

■ Independent spending campaigns — that is, a campaign by an entity ostensi-

## RESOURCE GUIDE

bly independent of a candidate or party — are a fast-growing sector of political spending. This can buy a group influence not just with individual lawmakers but also with party leadership. Candidates tend to like independent spending, except when they feel they're losing control of their own race. A current independent-spending trend is pumping money and effort into voter-identification and get-out-the-vote campaigns. They're not as sexy as a TV blitz, but in 1998, organized labor won several tight races this way.

■ Another trend to watch: spending by tax-exempt committees. These lie deep in the gray shadows of campaign finance law. Some organizations create them to run media campaigns, including so-called issue ads. Legally, these ads can't call for voters to cast ballots for or against a candidate. What they can do is attack a candidate with a viciousness another politician wouldn't risk. In 1996, a conservative group from Northern Virginia ran ads in Montana accusing a Democratic House candidate of wife-beating.

Tax-exempt committees don't register with the Federal Election Commission, so their finances — even their identities — often go largely unreported. Identifying them can involve dissecting IRS 990 forms — the tax returns of tax-exempt organizations, which are public documents — plus corporate filings and other records outside the usual orbit of political reporters.

Some political scientists argue that the impact of political money can't be quantified, that contributions don't correlate with recorded votes on legislation. But journalists can go hunting for all of the whispered motives, the wish lists, the favors and backroom decisions that don't lend themselves to statistical analysis.

### CAMPAIGN-TRAIL MONEY

Democrat Jane Doe is challenging your hometown congressman, Republican Joe Doaks. Here are some questions to ask about the money trail:

**FUND-RAISING** — Who's on the Doaks and Doe steering committees — that is, who's at the top of their fund-raising pyramids? What interest groups, local and national, are Doaks or Doe appealing to? How are the fund-raising strategies reflected in their stands on issues?

Are any groups giving to both sides?

Look for Doe to get money from trial lawyers and money, manpower, and maybe an independent ad campaign or get-out-the-vote drive from organized labor. Republican Doaks should be getting money, and possibly independent ads, from business and interest groups that deal with his legislative committees. If there are any major reversals to such patterns, find out why; they could be symptoms of a big story.

Also, ask where the candidates raise big dollars outside their districts or out of state. Who are their out-of-state donors; is their interest in the campaign ideological or economic? Who arranges these events and who attends? Finally, check to see who scrambles to climb onto the bandwagon by sending last-minute or post-election money.

**PARTY ACTIVITY** — Are the Republican and Democratic national committees contributing more or less than the national

average to local candidates — and if so, why? Hard-dollar contributions in House races are called "coordinated expenditures," and they're capped by law. In 1998, the limit for a house race was \$32,550.

Soft money, of course, is unrestricted.

**MONEY AS A PREDICTOR** — Interest groups want to invest wisely, so they constantly reassess candidates' prospects. As challenger, Doe has to convince the Democratic money early on that she has a shot. An early consensus can snowball. The Democratic and Republican national committees keep lists of key or targeted races. It's to the party operatives' tactical advantage to tell you the Doaks/Doe race is on its list. More honest appraisals surface in the operatives' fund-raising memos to lobbyists and PAC managers. Ask sources to leak them.

**POST-ELECTION DEBT** — Doe, the non-incumbent, is much more likely to go into debt. Typically, congressional candidates

## HOW TO READ A CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORT

You don't need to morph into a sleuth to analyze the raw numbers on a campaign finance report. Use them as a starting point for stories about what a campaign is doing — or failing to do.

State campaign finance reports vary from state to state. On the federal level, in reports to the FEC, the first two pages provide a financial overview. Here's a map:

**PAGE 1:** "Report of Receipts and Disbursements." This gives the grand totals raised and spent for the year-to-date and for the reporting period (reports are due more often as election day approaches). Check the total in and total out, of course; but also pay attention to cash on hand and debts to and by the campaign. Low cash flow and high debt are red flags for fund-raising problems.

**PAGE 2:** "Detailed Summary Page." This breaks down the page-one totals. In receipts, look for the proportion of individual to PAC money for a clue as to the nature of the contributions. Also look at loans, including from candidates to themselves. In disbursements, look for transfers to other committees (i.e., contributions to other candidates — always a good story) and loan repayments (to see if the campaign can afford to pay back the candidate). Watch also for contributions to politically active tax-exempt groups; such contributions are a way to finance a stealth campaign with someone else's name on the message.

Regarding soft money, which, of course, only parties can receive: disclosure rules are relatively weak. The FEC does not require party committees to total their soft money receipts or disbursements.

Following the two summary pages are sections for itemized receipts, disbursements, loans, and outstanding debts.

**RECEIPTS:** Typically, individual contributions are listed first, then PAC money. The FEC requires "best efforts" to determine donors' principal place of business. Virtually all politicians claim they believe in full disclosure, but they don't always make a "best effort."

**DISBURSEMENTS:** A hodge-podge of spending. Look to see how much a candidate is spending on direct mail versus TV, and see who his or her consultants are. Unusual disbursements to law firms may be the sign of a legal problem within the campaign.

**LOANS:** Usually from the candidate, who may have taken a second mortgage. Check interest rates and due date. Presidential candidates who take matching funds can use anticipated treasury payments as collateral.

**DEBTS AND OBLIGATIONS:** Unpaid bills. A campaign can show a big cash-on-hand figure but still be in debt. This section lists creditors.

lend their own personal funds — maybe through a second mortgage — rather than stiff their business neighbors. If Doe beats Doaks, she can schedule a Washington “debt-burning” event as soon as she lines up her committee assignments. The most eager contributors will be her new committee constituents.

## THE LOBBYING SCENE

As politicians raise money they have election day on their minds. But most contributors are thinking about what happens *after* that. Lobbying is the other side of the political money equation; big donors usually have big lobbying efforts.

Political contributions can be a relatively small part of a modern lobbying campaign. For example, Philip Morris (one of the biggest lobbying operations in Washington) reported \$23 million in lobbying costs in 1998, but just \$3.5 million in individual, PAC, and soft-money contributions in '97-'98. The lobbyists are key decision-makers in determining where campaign contributions will go. As campaign seasons grow longer, lobbying and political money are melding into a seamless web of activity.

There are other ways that lobbying and campaigning blend. For example, the American Association of Health Plans (the trade group of the managed care industry) this year launched a campaign to block “Patients’ Bill of Rights” legislation. The strategy was to defuse the issue by convincing Republicans in Congress that the bill wasn’t an issue in GOP presidential primaries. So starting last winter, the AAHP (1) polled Republican activists in New Hampshire and Iowa about the issue, (2) reported that the activists opposed more regulation of HMOs, (3) gave the poll results to political reporters in Iowa and New Hampshire, and (4) faxed those reporters’ stories to Capitol Hill, the presidential campaigns, and the national media.

Like campaign finance, lobbying is a regulated industry in which the disclosure requirements haven’t kept up with mushrooming practices. Congress, for example, requires disclosure of direct lobbying expenditures. But lobbyists don’t have to reveal exactly which lawmakers are being contacted or how much is being spent on grassroots (see below) lobbying — the fastest-growing segment of the business.

Suppose your local company, Gizmoids Inc., has suddenly surfaced as a political player. Here is what to look for:

■ Why has the company raised its political profile? It may be afraid of new federal regulations or federal deregulation of a competitor. Check with the agencies that regulate Gizmoid’s industry and the legislative committees that oversee the industry. If Gizmoid is a public company, check annual reports and filings at the Securities and Exchange Commission.

■ Concerning Gizmoid’s direct lobbying in Washington, whom has it hired? What are their political connections? Is a trade association doing the lobbying? What kind of political ties has it knit?

■ Which lawmakers are getting campaign money from Gizmoid? Your local member of Congress is probably already on Gizmoid’s side. The lawmakers it needs in its corner are the committee and subcommittee chairs, and the House and Senate leadership.

Is Gizmoid involved in a grassroots campaign? That is, are Gizmoid lobbyists organizing voters in key states or congressional districts to write letters or make phone calls to Capitol Hill on Gizmoid’s behalf? Does the grassroots campaign include TV and radio? Direct mail? Letters to the editor? Who are the local leaders? Check the public statements of the grassroots organization; sometimes an industry will use a boilerplate press release attributing identical quotes to local officials all over the country.

■ Is there a *grassroots* campaign? This is the newest mutation of lobbying — an effort to recruit local opinion leaders (politicians, civic leaders, media, clergy, et al.) to take up the corporate cause.

■ Is anyone running ads attacking Gizmoid’s competition? Who’s funding them? In transportation lobbying, for instance, it’s not uncommon for one sector of the industry to put together a front group challenging the safety record of a competing sector.

■ Who’s *not* being heard from? Disparities in money, access, and organization mean that not all interest groups get a seat at the negotiating table. For instance, in the 1998-99 battle for tighter bankruptcy laws, the credit and retail industries were prominent. But those who would be affected by tighter laws — i.e., people who will plunge into bankruptcy in the future — are an unidentified and therefore unorganized group. ■

## WHAT’S ON PAPER

Who files what, when, and where (dates are for the 2000 election cycle):

### FEDERAL CANDIDATES AND OFFICEHOLDERS

**What:** campaign finances — contributions, spending, loans, and debts.

**Where:** FEC and state secretaries of state.

**When:** semi-annually in '99; in 2000, candidates seeking election file quarterly, plus 12 days before and 30 days after a primary or general election. In the last 20 days before an election, candidates must report contributions and loans of \$1,000 or more within 48 hours of receipt.

**What:** personal finances, including investments, business ties, and special-interest trips.

**Where:** Clerk of the House (Legislative Resource Center: 202-226-5200), Secretary of the Senate (Public Records: 202-224-0758), Office of Government Ethics.

**When:** May 15

### FEDERAL PARTY COMMITTEES AND PACS

**What:** finances — receipts, spending, contributions to candidates.

**Where:** FEC.

**When:** Some follow the same schedule as candidates; others file monthly.

### STATE AND LOCAL CANDIDATES & COMMITTEES

State laws vary. See Justice Department links to state election law-enforcement agencies at [www.fec.gov/pubrec/cfsdd.htm](http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/cfsdd.htm).

### WASHINGTON LOBBYISTS AND CLIENTS

**What:** Names and addresses of lobbyist and client, congressional committee or executive agency being lobbied; amount spent, and issue or measure involved.

**Where:** House clerk, Senate secretary.

**When:** At beginning and end of lobbying effort, and semi-annually in between.

### TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS

**What:** IRS form 990, which gives a panoramic picture of receipts and spending, officers’ names and salaries, and major programs. A 990 can tell you who is running a politically active tax-exempt organization, what the organization is doing, and how much it’s spending. It may or may not tell you where the money is coming from.

**Where:** Copies via IRS regional offices. Also available for review, by law, at the filing organization’s main office and any regional office where it has 3 or more employees.

**When:** Most organizations file by May 15th.



# RESOURCES

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

### FEDERAL

**Federal Election Commission** — The agency has a long, well-documented history of troubles enforcing the federal election laws on contribution limits and disclosure. But it does a thorough if slow job collecting and disseminating fund-raising data. The FEC Web site has plenty of material, with search engines. The press office, headed by Ron Harris, and the public records office are both helpful. Press office, 202-694-1220; public records, 202-694-1120 [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov)

**FECInfo** — The best massager of FEC fund-raising data, this Web site is run by Tony Raymond, former FEC Webmaster, and Kent Cooper, previously the head of the FEC's public records division. Searchable databases on political money and Washington lobbying, which you can download. 202-628-0617/8 [kcooper@publicdisclosure.org](mailto:kcooper@publicdisclosure.org); [traymond@publicdisclosure.org](mailto:traymond@publicdisclosure.org); [www.tray.com/FECINFO](http://www.tray.com/FECINFO)

**Center for Responsive Politics** — Comprehensive source of data on political money and lobbying, the center compiles political money "profiles" of members of Congress showing where they get contributions. It also publishes weekly *Money and Politics Alert* e-mails on hot lobbying issues. Larry Makinson, executive director; Sheila Krumholz, research director; Paul Hendrie, communications director. 202-857-0044 [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)

**Common Cause** — The reform group keeps a database of federal soft-money donors, which are unregulated but reported, and periodically provides detailed analyses of how interest groups target their PAC funds, individual contributions, and soft money. Press office: 202-736-5770 [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)

**Center for Public Integrity** — The highly regarded investigative organization headed by Charles Lewis, the first expert in the money and politics field to be awarded a MacArthur Fellows Program "genius grant." Some of the center's investigations are for the TV networks; some of it is published in reports and books. The center's Web site also has an analysis of disclosure laws in the states. 202-466-1300 [www.publicintegrity.org](http://www.publicintegrity.org)

**Campaign Study Group** — Headed by former newspaperman Dwight Morris, who did

pioneering analyses of candidates' spending patterns in the late 1980s. Now Morris does campaign finance number-crunching for hire, and can provide data on contributions linked to specific lobbying efforts. 703-803-2073 [www.campaignstudygroup.com](http://www.campaignstudygroup.com)

**Citizens Research Foundation** — This academic organization, at the University of Southern California, has been analyzing campaign finance issues and data since the late 1950s. Acting director is Robert Hogan. 213-743-2303 [www.usc.edu/dept/](http://www.usc.edu/dept/)

**EDGAR** — The Securities and Exchange Commission's on-line repository of the quarterly, annual, and other filings required from publicly held companies. The documents often provide dollars and cents explanations of a corporation's lobbying issues. [www.sec.gov/edgarhp.htm](http://www.sec.gov/edgarhp.htm)

### STATE & REGIONAL

**The FEC Web site** — It has links to the state agencies that oversee political money — [www.fec.gov/pubrec/cfsdd.htm](http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/cfsdd.htm) — plus material on state campaign finance laws — [www.fec.gov/pages/cflaw98.htm](http://www.fec.gov/pages/cflaw98.htm)

**National Institute on Money in State Politics** — The institute collects financial reports filed with state agencies by campaigns and party committees. So far, it has at least partial data on contributions in some 30 states. 406-449-2480; [www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org)

**Campaign Finance Information Center** — A good starting point for finding state-level campaign money data, this is a joint project of Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. (IRE) and the National Institute of Computer-Assisted Reporting. 573-882-1982. [www.campaignfinance.org](http://www.campaignfinance.org)

**Reporters' Reference Center on Campaign Finance Reform** — A clearing-house for information about reform efforts in the states, operated by the Richard M. Neustadt Center for Communications in the Public Interest. 202-638-5770; [www.benton.org/neustadt/reporters](http://www.benton.org/neustadt/reporters)

### PRACTITIONERS

**Trevor Potter** — Former FEC chairman Potter is now in private practice; he also lectures and writes on campaign finance issues, is counsel to Senator John McCain's presidential campaign, and edits the Brookings Institution Web site on cam-

paign finance issues — [www.brookings.edu/gs/campaign/cfr\\_hp.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/gs/campaign/cfr_hp.htm). 202-719-4273 [tpotter@wrf.com](mailto:tpotter@wrf.com)

**Ken Gross** — A lawyer in the campaign-finance field who's had prominent clients in both parties; he was — still is, in fact — outside counsel to Bob Dole's 1996 presidential committee. 202-371-7007

**Bob Bauer** — The prominent Democratic campaign finance lawyer does extensive work for party committees, and is counsel to Bill Bradley's presidential committee. 202-434-1602; [bauer@perkinscoie.com](mailto:bauer@perkinscoie.com)

**Jan Witold Baran** — One of the leading Republican campaign finance lawyers; represented then-Speaker Newt Gingrich during most of the House ethics committee probe. 202-719-7330; [jbaran@wrf.com](mailto:jbaran@wrf.com)

**Mark Braden** — Another GOP lawyer, a master at exploiting loopholes for soft money and campaign activity by tax-exempt organizations. 202-861-1504 [mbraden@baker-hostetler.com](mailto:mbraden@baker-hostetler.com)

**Benjamin Ginsburg** — A former general counsel to the Republican National Committee, now national counsel for the George W. Bush campaign. 202-457-6405

**American Association of Political Consultants** — Director Holley Schoenke can provide introductions to the professionals who spend much of the campaign money. 202-371-9585; [www.theaapc.org](http://www.theaapc.org)

**Stan Huckaby** — A political financial consultant who specializes in handling FEC compliance for Republican presidential candidates. Every four years, Huckaby writes the definitive projection of how much the next presidential candidates will have to spend. 703-549-7705

**Ron Faucheux** — Editor-in-chief, *Campaigns & Elections* magazine, a critic of efforts to restrict the money flow and an expert in how the money is deployed. 202-887-8530; [www.camelect.com](http://www.camelect.com)

**American League of Lobbyists** — Even Washington lobbyists need a trade association to protect their interests. 703-960-3011

### SCHOLARS

Some of the most-quoted political scientists are attuned to political money issues. Among them:

**Thomas Mann**, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution, and **Norman Ornstein**, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, have drafted reform proposals together and separately. Mann: 202-797-6050 [tmann@brook.edu](mailto:tmann@brook.edu); [www.brookings.edu/gs/](http://www.brookings.edu/gs/)



campaign/cfr\_hp.htm Ornstein: 202-862-5893  
nornstein@aei.org; www.aei.org

**Larry Sabato, University of Virginia** — A longtime student of campaign finance issues, Sabato is director of the university's Center for Governmental Studies. Its Web site includes campaign finance analyses and material on one of Sabato's special interests, dirty tricks. 804-243-8468 sabato@virginia.edu; www.virginia.edu/govstudies

**James Thurber, American University** — Along with his general knowledge of Congress and politics, Thurber is especially attentive to lobbying issues. 202-885-6247

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE SPECIALISTS

**Clyde Wilcox, Georgetown University** — He is overseeing a study of big contributors and why they give. 202-687-5273

**John Green, Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, University of Akron** — Green is editor of *Financing the 1996 Elections*, the latest in the definitive series of books on presidential-year campaign finances; it's published by Citizens Research Foundation and M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York. Green is also working with Clyde Wilcox on the donors study. 330-972-5182 green@uakron.edu

**Anthony Corrado, Colby College** — A solid analyst, and among the stronger proponents of reform in the political science community. 207-872-3556

**David Magleby, Brigham Young University** — Author of a recent nationwide study of independent spending and soft money. 801-378-4284 David\_Magleby@byu.edu

**Roy Schotland, Georgetown University Law Center** — Studies campaign finance law, with a special interest in reform issues and the role of money in the popular election of judges. 202-662-9098

**Diana Dwyré, California State University at Chico** — Is chronicling the recent history of reform efforts, and has been following the growth of soft money. 530-898-6041; DDWYRE@csuchico.edu

**Ronald Shaiko, American University** — Runs the university's Lobbying Institute, a how-to shop for budding lobbyists. 202-885-6274

**Francis Hill, University of Miami Law School** — (See Campaign-Finance Sources, page 44)

## PERIODICALS

**BNA's Money & Politics Report** — A \$799-a-year Internet newsletter covering campaign

finance and ethics issues at federal and state levels. Published by the Bureau of National Affairs. 202-452-4200; subscription info: 800-372-1033; www.bna.com/moneyandpolitics

**Political Finance & Lobby Reporter** — A newsletter covering federal, state, and local developments in campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics. Editor and publisher Edward Zuckerman takes a dim view of most reform proposals. Published twice monthly. 703-858-4250; www.pacfinder.com

**Campaigns & Elections** — The trade magazine of politics, published 10 times a year. The Web site has a directory of political consultants. 202-638-7788 www.camelect.com

## BOOKS

**America: What Went Wrong?** — Donald Barlett and James Steele, 1992, Andrews McMeel Publishing — Book version of the award-winning *Philadelphia Inquirer* series, with vivid examples of how interests can shape government policy, and — noteworthy for political money stories — how ordinary people are affected.

**The Buying of the Congress** — Charles Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity, 1998, Avon Books — A sweeping anthology of the money links between lawmakers and interest groups. The Center is now working on the 2000 edition of *The Buying of the President*; (www.publicintegrity.gov)

**Campaign Finance Reform** — A Sourcebook. Anthony Corrado, Thomas Mann,

Daniel Ortiz, Trevor Potter & Frank Sorauf, 1997, Brookings Institution Press. A reform reader, with essays and key documents. The Brookings campaign-finance Web site (www.brookings.edu/gsc/campaign/cfr\_hp.htm) updates and supplements the book.

**The Day After Reform: Sobering Campaign Finance Lessons from the American States** — Michael Malbin and Thomas Gais, 1998, Rockefeller Institute Press — A hard-eyed look at the effect of campaign finance reforms in the states, with an emphasis on poorly drafted laws and unintended consequences.

**Honest Graft: Big Money and the American Political Process** — Brooks Jackson, revised edition 1990, Washington, D.C., Farragut Publishing — One of the best books ever written on the topic, chronicling the rise and fall of high-powered congressman Tony Coelho as the House Democrats' moneyman in the 1980s.

**The Corruption of American Politics** — Elizabeth Drew, 1999, Birch Lane Press — A dean of the money-and-politics beat, Drew takes a big-picture snapshot of how campaign finance and other factors shape modern American politics.

**Washington Representatives, 23rd edition** — 1999, Columbia Books Inc. — The latest annual compilation of Washington lobbyists and their clients. Published every May. Columbia Books also publishes the *National Directory of Corporate Public Affairs*, covering corporate lobbyists, PR staff and others nationwide. 888-265-0600; www.columbiabooks.com ■

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Here are a few stories to look for in the 2000 election cycle:

■ The national party committees are likely to be setting records in soft money. The DNC has "Leadership 2000," for people who raise or contribute \$350,000 by the convention. The RNC has "Season Pass," for contributors of \$250,000 and up.

■ The national parties will be searching for ways to bypass the FEC and channel soft-money donations straight into state party accounts (as the DNC did with tobacco money in '96). Depending on individual state laws, this scheme can completely avoid disclosure.

■ Some lawmakers are raising soft money for their own leadership PACs — their politician-to-politician contribution entities — but reporting it either at the state level or not at all. They can hide corporate contributions via this loophole.

■ Corporations, trade associations, and ideological groups show every sign that they'll step up spending on campaign-season issue ads — financing that isn't reported to the FEC.

■ Candidates for Congress and state offices will travel farther afield, to big cities outside their districts and states, in pursuit of big contributors for their campaign committees and leadership PACs.

## THE REFORM DEBATE — AND SOME ADDITIONAL SOURCES

**C**ongress has bucked it for years, but campaign finance reform remains a live issue in Washington. In July, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott promised Republican John McCain and Democrat Russell Feingold to bring up their reform bill "no later than mid-October." McCain-Feingold would prohibit the parties from using soft money, and would put some limits on "issue" ads by outside groups. The House is also scheduled to discuss campaign reform this fall.

There's even more action in the states. Reformers are promoting legislation as well as voter initiatives for lower contribution limits and for so-called "clean money" programs — partial public financing for candidates who agree to spending limits. But while reformers are making some progress in the legislative branches, opponents of money limits are winning in the courts, undoing new reforms and rolling back the old ones.

A highly condensed history: Congress outlawed corporate campaign contributions in 1907, following a scandal involving Theodore Roosevelt's presidential campaign. It extended the ban to unions in 1943. Watergate-era reforms in the 1970s included some public financing for presidential elections, campaign-finance disclosure, contribution limits on individuals and PACs, and provisions promoting PACs. Since 1979, hundreds of reform bills have been introduced, and a few actually considered, but no significant reforms have become law.

At the center of all campaign finance debates — state and federal — is a convoluted and controversial Supreme Court decision from 1976: *Buckley v. Valeo*. The justices threw out a large chunk of the Watergate reforms, and in doing so drew some strange lines between contributions to a candidate and expenditures by a candidate. Contributions can be restricted, *Buckley* said, but expenditures are political speech and thus protected by the First Amendment. The First Amendment protection has gradually expanded — to the joy of opponents of reform.

Much of the reform debate has become predictable, as the two sides argue past each other. Advocates of reform try to correlate contributions with legislative or executive decisions; opponents invoke the First Amendment. Advocates say the system is rigged to protect incumbents; opponents argue that reforms would dry up money for challengers.

More newsworthy are the schisms within each camp. Reformers disagree on how to deal with *Buckley*. Some are working to repeal it. Others say it's not really an obstacle to carefully written reforms. A few have argued for a constitutional amendment, which would explicitly say that political money is not a form of free speech. Among conservatives, some simply want to loosen the current limits. Others say the limits should be abolished, but with better, faster disclosure. Still others insist disclosure itself is unconstitutional.

The debate doesn't lack hypocrisy. Lawmakers like to introduce reform bills that they know won't go anywhere. And reform is more likely to get more votes when it seems doomed to die in the other chamber. But even the most sincere advocates of reform are saddled with the current rules to raise money for their own campaigns.

Here, on the right, are some resources for covering the reform debate:

**Common Cause** — Leading advocate of tighter regulations on political money. On the staff, Edwin Davis has an excellent perspective on the evolution and current status of reform efforts: 202-736-5751. Press office: 202-736-5770; [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)

**Fred Wertheimer** — Former president of Common Cause, now heads a small group called Democracy 21, which like Common Cause is involved in the issues of political money and democracy. 202-429-2008

**Public Campaign** — Promotes "clean money" reforms with voluntary public financing. Ellen Miller, the director, is knowledgeable — and passionate — about money issues. Press person is Jodie Silverman. 202-293-0222; [www.publiccampaign.org](http://www.publiccampaign.org)

**Campaign for America** — A research and advocacy organization founded by financier Jerome Kohlberg Jr. to reduce the influence of big money. Research is provided by Kent Cooper and Tony Raymond at Public Disclosure, Inc. (See Data Collection and Analysis.) The organization's director is Cheryl Perrin. 202-628-0610; [www.campaignamerica.org](http://www.campaignamerica.org); [cdperrin@aol.com](mailto:cdperrin@aol.com)

**Public Citizen/Congress Watch** — The Nader organization most involved in political money issues, Congress Watch does occasional analysis of contributions and lobbying. On campaign finance reform, Public Citizen is allied with Common Cause. Director of Congress Watch is Frank Clemente. 202-546-4996; [www.citizen.org/congress](http://www.citizen.org/congress)

**James Bopp Jr.** — The leading lawyer in conservative challenges to the FEC. 812-232-2434

**American Civil Liberties Union** — Fiercely opposes most reform bills as restrictions on political speech, but the leadership is divided on the issue. What it's for is full public financing. Washington director is Laura Murphy. 202-544-1681 [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)

**Bradley Smith** — A law professor at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, and a strong voice for repealing the limits on political money. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott is trying to put him on the FEC. 614-445-4373; [www.law.capital.edu/faculty/bsmith.htm](http://www.law.capital.edu/faculty/bsmith.htm)

**Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law** — A think tank whose mission includes challenging *Buckley v. Valeo*. Director is E. Joshua Rosenkranz; press contact is Kenneth Weine. 212-998-6730; [www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org)

**National Voting Rights Institute** — Approaches political money as a civil rights issue, a wildly unpopular idea among politicians, but one that in June earned director John Bonifaz a "genius grant" fellowship from the MacArthur Foundation. Press contact is Sharon Basco. 617-368-9100; [www.world.std.com/~nvri](http://www.world.std.com/~nvri)

**Francis Hill, University of Miami School of Law** — Specializes in the study of tax-exempt political activities. 305-284-2642; [fhill@law.miami.edu](mailto:fhill@law.miami.edu); [www.law.miami.edu/people/faculty/fhill.html](http://www.law.miami.edu/people/faculty/fhill.html)

**Political Money Monitor** — An electronic newsletter from the National Center for Public Policy Research, a conservative policy group. *PMM* says it "promotes the spirit of political choice." This includes strict limits on labor unions' political activities, and deregulation of campaign contributions. 202-371-1400; [www.nationalcenter.org/PMMIndex.html](http://www.nationalcenter.org/PMMIndex.html) ■

A COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW SURVEY IN CONJUNCTION WITH PUBLIC AGENDA

# WOULD YOU WANT YOUR KID TO BE A JOURNALIST?

**A** question for journalists: If your son or daughter approached you for career advice, would you recommend or discourage journalism as a life's work? And what reasons would you offer?

In collaboration with the nonprofit, nonpartisan research firm Public Agenda, we posed those queries to CJR's panel of high-level editors and news directors around the country. Ninety-one filled out our not-for-attribution questionnaire. Of those respondents, 57 percent work on newspapers, 12 percent in television, 11 percent on magazines, and 7 percent in radio. (Eleven percent specified "other.") Only 1 percent are full-time online journalists, but roughly a tenth have at least some online reporting or editing experience.

In a rousing vote of confidence for the profession, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of the news people we polled declared they would indeed encourage their offspring to pursue journalism as a career. Less than a fifth (19 percent) said they'd steer young people away from it. And 2 percent came down firmly on both sides of the question: they'd encourage it for some reasons and discourage it for others.

When we asked our panel which particular medium they'd recommend for their sons and daughters, newspapers came in number one with 59 percent of the vote. But — perhaps not so surprisingly — online journalism was second by a nose, with a walloping 58 percent. Trailing behind came magazines (31

percent), television (21 percent), and radio (13 percent). Eight percent said they'd recommend no news medium at all.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Among the panelists who would encourage their sons and daughters to enter journalism, one news person struck the commonest chord:

"It is important work.

It is honorable work.

It is noble work.

It is fun."

Other comments:

■ "Journalism still offers the challenge of public service and being on the cutting edge of what is happening in our society. It nourishes the hunger for learning. One reporter, one photogra-

pher, one artist, one editor can still make a difference."

■ "If money is not the object, you can't beat journalism as a career — the endless learning, the constant change, the daily challenge, and, most importantly, service to the public. But you have to be willing to make journalism the center of your life. Balancing family and work, while do-able, will be a challenge."

■ "I recommend it because of the opportunity it affords to be a part of every action, movement, change. But most of all because reporting the truth is a more satisfying way to earn a living than 90 percent of the (more lucrative) occupations dangled in front of young people today."

## BUT ON THE OTHER HAND...

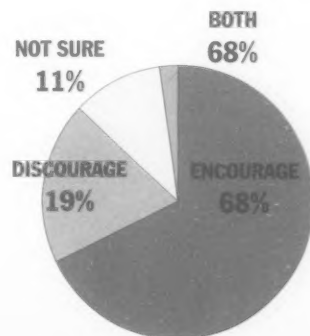
Thirty percent of our respondents either, a) would discourage kids from being journalists, or b) are "not sure" exactly which way to steer them. Excerpts from those opinions:

■ "Too much grief. Too little reward."

■ "The profession has changed. Sensationalism is more widespread. In the field, I'm surprised now if I'm treated with the dignity afforded the average citizen."

■ "Too much bottom-line pressure and not enough emphasis on good journalism, ethics, and quality. Pay is inconsis-

**If your son or daughter asked you for career advice, would you encourage or discourage a career in journalism?**



NOTE: PERCENTAGES FOR ALL CHARTS MAY NOT EQUAL 100% BECAUSE OF MULTIPLE RESPONSES OR ROUNDING. SURVEY RESULTS BASED ON RESEARCH BY CJR AND PUBLIC AGENDA.

## CJR POLL

tent with work and responsibilities. Downsizing has created a much-too-stressful work environment."

■ "I want something better for my kids than working for some tight-fisted corporate henchman."

■ "The commitment to real journalism is not there. Now that affirmative action is passé, there is no urgency to address diversity — a particular hardship for African-Americans. I would tell my daughter to run — don't walk — in the other direction."

One TV newsman in the "discourage" group displayed a good-humored ambiguity about his advice. He complained about the long hours and low pay and lamented that the profession often "leaves a trail of disappointment." He and his wife have insisted that their daughters focus on math and science and "careers that are more likely to last a lifetime."

Then, in a parenthetical afterthought, he confided: "P.S. I love my job."

## AN UNLIMITED UPSIDE

What's the most promising news medium for young people to enter today? That query elicited some strong views.

### ABOUT THE CJR POLL

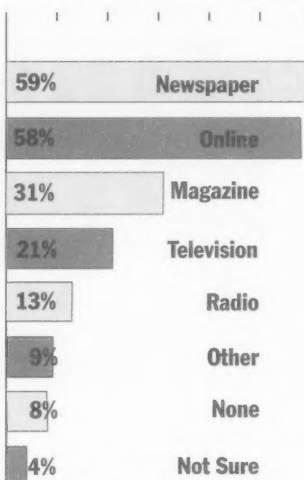
These findings report the views of 91 editors and news directors from print and broadcast media who responded to a questionnaire sent by fax on July 15. Responses received through July 28 were tabulated.

The *Columbia Journalism Review* drew the names from membership lists of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the American Society of Magazine Editors, the Radio-Television News Directors Association, the Associated Press Managing Editors, and the National Association of Black Journalists.

This survey is based upon a non-random, self-selected sample. The results represent the views of those who chose to respond to the survey; they are not generalizable to the journalist population as a whole.

To access these findings online, visit [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org), or [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org).

Which medium would you recommend that they enter?  
(You may choose more than one.)



One of the many enthusiasts for online voiced the consensus: "It's the future — and there's more money in it for beginners and apprentices, for those who can figure out how to make it work."

Another: "Online opportunities are growing fast. The upside is practically unlimited. Good people with strong values and journalistic instincts will be sorely needed."

One news person who recommended an online career also checked off newspapers and magazines, saying, "The journalist of the 21st century must be a renaissance man/woman skilled at reporting the news through all possible mediums."

And another: "It seems to me, coming from a television news background, that print journalism, both newspapers and online, is the only relevant press left."

In the end, newspapers were the top choice of our panelists for their progenies' vocation. Why? "Because newspaper journalism has been, is now, and will be the basic form of communication on which all other media are based."

One newspaper editor had a fairly airtight reason for recommending that his son go into journalism: "He would be doing God's work." The editor then recommended newspapers as the best medium for the kid. "No serious person I know," he asserted, "would get his or her news any other way." ■

—Neil Hickey

## NATIONAL PRESS NPF FOUNDATION

**Housing & Communities  
Looking at the Future  
A Conference for Journalists  
September 29-October 1, 1999  
All Expenses Paid**

This is a unique program for us, since it will be held in conjunction with the Fannie Mae Foundation's annual meeting called "A Decent Home and Suitable Living Environment: Assessing 50 Years of Federal Housing." The Fannie Mae Foundation program will last for 1-1/2 days and be attended by more than 150 experts on housing from around the nation. We will wrap another day and a half around that for 20 selected journalists and organize programs for print and broadcast journalists only. As always, this program is on the record and all points of view will be represented. Topics under consideration for the journalists' segment include:

- Overview & Definitions
- Housing demographics
- The aging Baby Boomers
- Smart growth and suburban sprawl
- Downtown housing
- Minorities and home ownership
- Newly arriving immigrants and urban revitalization
- Predicting interest rates

The first day of the program (Wednesday) will start for journalists with orientation, definitions and overview components. Dinner and a discussion will follow. Thursday will be spent at the Fannie Mae Foundation programs. Friday we will be back at the NPF conference center for the journalists-only component.

If you cover city hall, urban issues, population growth, or handle editorials that deal with sprawl, congestion, home ownership or new populations, this could be an important part of your learning curve.

**There is no application form.** To apply, send us a letter stating why you wish to attend, a letter of support from your editor or producer, a brief bio and one clip. Applications will not be returned. **Deadline for applications is September 7 at 5 pm.** Send applications to National Press Foundation Housing Program, 1211 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20045. Call for information at 202-721-9106. Email is [npf@natpress.org](mailto:npf@natpress.org). Fax is 202-530-2855. Latest information always posted on our website, [www.natpress.org](http://www.natpress.org).

*Underwritten by a grant from the  
Fannie Mae Foundation.*

*The National Press Foundation is a non-profit  
educational foundation.*



*TV news is moving from the drab old neighborhood to*

# BEACHFRONT PROPERTY ON THE CYBER SEA

*Does the public deserve a modest rent, as the television industry occupies this extraordinarily valuable electronic real estate?*

BY NEIL HICKEY

**Y**ou probably haven't noticed, but digital television — the revolutionary new way of beaming out TV programs — is already here. Scores of the nation's 1,600 television stations are offering it, although fewer than 50,000 American TV homes out of 98 million have so far bought the \$5,000-\$12,000 TV sets needed to display those pictures. (That price will plummet as volume grows.) But in the next half-dozen years or so, as the transition from old-fangled analog TV-casting to digital is completed, every TV set in America will be obsolete and consumers will need new ones to enjoy the full benefits of the new Digital Age.

Digital television (DTV) has important implications for journalism and the public's need for a decent diet of news and public affairs programs. One big feature of DTV — besides its high-definition picture and wide, Cinemascope-shaped screen — is that it allows TV stations to transmit six or eight channels simultaneously instead of just one. That's called multiplexing, and is the proximate cause for a ripping good don-

*Neil Hickey is CJR's editor at large.*

nybrook among broadcasters, consumer activists, legislators, and bureaucrats.

At issue: Should TV stations be obliged to use some of this enormously expanded air time to offer public interest programs: local news around the clock; documentaries and discussions on matters of importance to the community; free time for office-holders and office-seekers; informational and educational shows for kids? TV people are angrily against anyone telling them how to fill those new channels. But many consumer groups insist that broadcasters owe a payback to the public for the right to exploit the public's own airwaves.

A bit of background: The Telecommunications Act of 1996 gave all commercial and public TV stations in the U.S. — free of charge — an additional channel while they convert from analog transmission (the system that's been in place since TV began) to digital, which uses the ones and zeroes of computer language. It was a gift (worth \$70 billion by some estimates) that triggered the wrath of activists who claimed broadcasters ought to pay for such priceless electronic real estate. (A former Federal Communications Commission chairman, Reed Hundt, called it "beachfront property on the Cyber Sea.") When the transition is complete,



Top, Congressman Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts; Newton Minow, former chairman, FCC; below, Lawrence K. Grossman, former president, NBC News



PHOTOS BY PAMELA WITTY

broadcasters will return the old analog channel to the government, which will auction it off to interested telecommunications entrepreneurs

Last December, after fifteen months of deliberation, the twenty-two-member Advisory Committee on Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters (the so-called Gore Commission) sent to the White House a thick document ("Charting the Digital Broadcasting Future") that pleased practically nobody. "Marketplace forces do not always deliver important social benefits, such as...adequate attention to public affairs," said the report. "In such circumstances, government can appropriately play a role."

That kind of talk sent shivers through TV people, who regularly assume a defensive crouch at any hint of government meddling in their business. But the objections of TV executives on the

## TELEVISION

commission prevailed, and the final report favored only "minimal regulation," avoiding any suggestion that digital stations be mandated to cover the news, or air any specific public interest programs. So they're free — pending any FCC or congressional action to the contrary — to use the new channels exclusively for money-making attractions like pay-per-view movies, home shopping, or hoary sitcom reruns.

**D**emocratic Congressman Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts pointed out recently that, while TV stations are avid for the digital channels, they're not at all sure what to do with them. And they're waiting to see how — or if — the FCC intends to implement the Gore Commission's recommendations. Analog broadcasters over the years have borne various obligations, Markey noted: rules about fairness, the endorsing of political candidates, personal attacks on people, children's programming. The question now, he said, is whether to bring some of those values of the analog era into the digital era. The broadcasters "are moving from the old neighborhood to Malibu." It's a prodigious increase in the value of their real estate. Since the public extracted a good public interest benefit from the old urban property, he said, "then we should be able to extract a similar or greater benefit from the beachfront property."

Markey, speaking at a symposium at the Library of Congress in Washington sponsored by the *Columbia Journalism Review*, lamented that many TV stations give scant coverage to the electoral process, the candidates, or the issues. "Cover health," they're told [by TV news consultants]. "Cover more sports. Cover life-style issues. What's the hot new diet? The new vacation spot? But don't cover politics." In the new age, suggested the congressman — one in which broadcasting will continue to be more pervasive than cable TV or the Internet — viewers have a right to expect some public good from having ceded to the broadcasters so priceless a natural resource.

At the symposium, other experts offered lively views. Former FCC chairman Newton Minow claimed that only two other countries — Malaysia and Taiwan — don't provide free air time for candidates. "Unless we change that," he insisted, "the whole democratic process is at risk." It's a colossal irony, he said, that candidates sell

access to something that the public owns — namely the government — by taking campaign contributions from special interests. Then they use that money to buy access to something else all of us own — the airwaves — when they spend millions on TV time for political commercials.

Don't forget, said Minow, that schools, hospitals, policemen, and firemen wanted that digital spectrum as an important communications tool to improve their service to the public.

But the government said no to all of them — out of fear that the Japanese would grab the lead in digital technology — and, instead, awarded the spectrum, free of charge, to broadcasters, thereby forfeiting the tens of billions of dollars that an auction might have provided the U.S. Treasury.

Even though almost everybody will be affected by the emergence of DTV, the public knows practically nothing about it. And the public isn't going to know, said Lawrence K. Grossman, former president of PBS and NBC News (another of the CJR symposiasts), because "the story doesn't get covered in the places where most people get their news, namely on television." Print coverage appears mostly in technical journals and in the business pages of a few big-city newspapers.

Entombed in the Gore Commission report, actually, are some sensible proposals. Examples:

■ Digital TV broadcasters who "reap enhanced economic benefits" from broadcasting on multiple channels should pay the government a fee for the privilege, or else make one of their new channels available for local news and public affairs. Or give studio time to community groups that want to ventilate local issues.

■ As part of comprehensive campaign finance reform, broadcasters should "commit firmly" to reform the role of television in campaigns. The industry should voluntarily provide five minutes every night, in the thirty days before an election, for federal, state, and local candidates to get their messages out.

■ Digital stations ought to make a real effort to ascertain their communities' needs, and then fulfill them through news, public affairs, children's, and other programs. And they should be obliged to report to the FCC quarterly on how well, or poorly, they met that requirement.

■ Regulators should consider imposing a "pay or play" model, under which broadcasters would have zero public interest obligations, but would pay a small share of their gross revenues (2 percent, perhaps), with the money going to public TV and other telecommunications entities that create worthwhile shows.

More than nine months after the elaborate, detailed commission document went to the White House it is languishing there, instead of being forwarded to the FCC for implementation. Vice President Gore, its initiator, is busy running for the presidency. Most members of Congress are campaigning for reelection. Most broadcasters would be happy if the Gore report were interred and forgotten. For a candidate, this is no time to antagonize the TV station owners and network chieftains who control politicians' most important gateway to voters.

Meanwhile, digital television — the most sweeping and promising innovation in our broadcast history — continues to roll out across the nation. Will it ever provide the greatest good for the greatest number? Right now, the answer to that is blowin' in the wind. ■

### Bundeskanzler Scholarships for Germany, 2000-'01

Prospective U.S. leaders in academia, government, public service or the private sector spend one year in Germany for study, research, or professional activity. Individuals pursue a carefully defined project at a German university, research facility or other appropriate institution. Scholarship includes a two-week study tour of the Federal Republic of Germany.

B.A. required. Command of German is NOT a prerequisite. Must be U.S. citizen under 35 years of age at start of award. Applications due October 31, 1999.

[www.avh.de](http://www.avh.de)

[info@humboldtoundation.org](mailto:info@humboldtoundation.org)

# THIS WARRING CENTURY



*In two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf, Kosovo, and scores of conflicts in between, journalists from Richard Harding Davis to Christiane Amanpour have struggled to get their stories told — sometimes under tough military restrictions. Here's the latest in CJR's Millennium series on newsgathering over the past ten decades, chronicling how the media fight for battlefield information and how the armed forces strive to control it.*

BY H.D.S. GREENWAY

*"The happy days when [war correspondents] were guests of the army, when news was served to them by the men who made the news . . . have passed. Now, with every army the correspondent is as popular as a floating mine . . ."*

— Richard Harding Davis, 1914

**A**rmed forces and reporters have always had an ambivalent relationship. The reporter's job is to gather information and disseminate it, and in wartime there is a hell of a story to tell. For military people charged with conducting a war, fulfilling journalists' needs can be a nuisance — even a threat. As a World War II military censor put it, "I wouldn't tell the people anything until the war is over and then I'd tell them who won."

Basically, the military authorities

have three concerns. They don't want journalists reporting information that could alert the enemy and get soldiers killed. They don't want the home front demoralized. And, as in any bureaucracy, they don't want their own mistakes and incompetence exposed. War correspondents usually accept and respect

the first concern and utterly reject the last. It is the question of what constitutes demoralizing the home front, as opposed to giving the public what it needs to know, that has caused most of the problems between the news trade and the warriors. "Public opinion wins wars," General Eisenhower told newspaper edi-



UP correspondent Ernie Pyle on a transport taking Marines to the 1945 invasion of Okinawa

*H.D.S. Greenway covered conflict in Indochina, Pakistan, the Middle East, and the Balkans for Time, The Washington Post, and The Boston Globe. He is currently the editorial page editor of The Boston Globe.*

LOGO ART/ROB HARELL

CORBIS/RETNA/JUP

tors during World War II. He considered reporters attached to his headquarters as "quasi-staff officers," and for the most part they acted that way.

Winston Churchill criticized pessimistic reporting from the Anzio beachhead in 1944. "Such words as 'desperate' ought not to be used about the position in a battle of this kind when they are false," he declared. "Still less should they be used if they were true."

In America's undeclared wars — in which the reasons why we fought were less clear — disagreements festered on how much the American people should know and not know. The AP's Tom Lambert and the UP's Peter Kalischer were banned from Korea in 1950 for writing stories about the panic, lack of equipment, and disarray of American forces caught in the North Korean attack.

They had disclosed information that would have a "bad moral and psychological effect," the army said. General MacArthur lifted the ban, but told the two reporters they had a "responsibility in the matter of psychological warfare." When David McConnell of the *New York Herald Tribune* reported that an American bomber had strafed the truce talk zone, he was told by the military not to "forget which side you're on." Years later, in Vietnam, Admiral Harry Felt repeated this admonition to Malcolm Browne of the AP: "Why don't you get on the team?"

And so it has been for most of this century, as one side fights for information and the other fights either to deny or control it. In April *The New York Times* said of the Kosovo war: "When democracies send their military forces into combat, citizens need to know as much about the battles as sensible security precautions permit. In the case of Kosovo . . . NATO and the Pentagon must provide a detailed account of the effectiveness of the air war. It is a responsibility they have so far largely failed to meet." Be it Flanders in 1914, or Brussels in 1999, the policy at military briefings has been: emphasize enemy

atrocities, but keep allied operations under wraps.

The American century began in 1898 with the capture of the Spanish empire, when newspapers were at their most irrepressible best and irresponsible worst.

The famous alleged telegraph exchange between William Randolph Hearst and his combat artist in Florida tells the story. "Everything is quiet . . . There will be no war . . . I wish to return,"

Frederic Remington cabled. Hearst replied: "Please remain. You furnish pictures. I will furnish war."

When the war came censorship came with it. But this did not stop publication of wild, misleading, and just plain untrue stories in what came to be called the yellow press. Battles that never took place were reported, not so much by correspondents in the field, but by Washington

bureaus, and in the fevered imaginations of editors back home. Perhaps never before or since did American journalism better prove the old dictum attributed to Senator Hiram Johnson: The first casualty of war is truth.

Censorship wasn't fool-proof. Richard Harding Davis, the most famous American war correspondent of his time, got into trouble for describing how worn out American troops were, "hanging to the crest of the San Juan hills by their teeth and fingernails." The story was printed in the *New York Herald* on July 7, 1898, and re-cabled to the *Paris Herald*, where the Spanish embassy forwarded it to Madrid. Spain alerted their besieged Santiago garrison, allegedly giving them increased hope, and encouraging them to hold out longer. The Santiago garrison soon surrendered, so Davis was off the hook. But the danger of modern communication, and how news might be flashed around the world and used by an enemy, had been established. No longer did news travel by slow boat.

There is a direct link between Davis's story and CNN's realization in the gulf war that news about where the missiles were landing in Tel Aviv might be useful to Saddam Hussein rocketeers.

Relations between reporters and the military authorities became even more strained during World War I. Correspondents had to swear to "convey the truth to the people of the United States," but refrain from disclosing news that might help the enemy. Newspapers had to pay \$1,000 to the army to cover each correspondent's equipment and maintenance, and post a \$10,000 bond — an immense sum in those days — to be forfeited if a reporter didn't follow the military rules.

Frederick Palmer, who had been the only American war correspondent accredited to the British Army, became the American army's chief press overlord and censor — a poacher turned game-keeper. Later, Palmer would speak of his "double life" during the war, in which he served as a "public liar to keep up the spirit of the armies and the peoples of our side."

When Westbrook Pegler in the winter of 1917-1918 broke censorship to expose how ill the army was housed and equipped, the army said he was too young and inexperienced and tried to get the United Press to recall him — much the same as the White House tried to have David Halberstam recalled from Vietnam more than forty years later, only in Pegler's case the army succeeded. "Censorship is developing more in the news interests of the military than in that of the American reader," Pegler wrote.

Henrietta Eleanor Hull became the first accredited American woman war correspondent in a day when women didn't even have the vote. Her articles, bylined "Peggy," in the *Chicago Tribune*, were Ernie Pyle-style stories about the daily lives of ordinary soldiers. Hull was "a victim of male rivals," Phillip Knightley wrote in *The First Casualty*, his celebrated book on war correspondents. She was never allowed to witness combat, forbidden to visit training camps and hospitals, and was forced to wait out the war in Paris.

When America entered World War II, Washington quickly set up an Office of Censorship and an Office of War Information to handle the flow of news. Knightley quotes an American censor: "Newspapers . . . and broadcasting stations must be as actively behind the war effort as merchants or manufacturers." Total war would require journalists' total compliance, and for the most part that's



**The dashing Richard Harding Davis (1864-1916) was the most famous combat correspondent of his time**



what the military got in what would be America's last truly patriotic war.

One reporter loved equally by the troops, the public, and the brass was Ernie Pyle, who wasn't interested in second-guessing strategy, or exposing incompetence. "Our soldiers always seemed to fight a little better when Ernie was around," said General Omar Bradley. His reporting reached 300 daily papers and 10,000 weeklies. Pyle reached a stage where he could no longer bear to see another dead body or ruined town, so he returned to the U.S. "The old romanticism about getting itchy feet to get back to the front is a myth as far as I am concerned," he said. But he was persuaded to ship out again to the Pacific, where he was killed by a Japanese bullet close to the war's end.

Women war correspondents came into their own during World War II, finally prevailing against prejudices. At first they were relegated to behind-the-lines reporting, like Hull. But women such as Helen Kirkpatrick of the *Chicago Daily News*, Martha Gellhorn writing for *Collier's*, and photographer Margaret Bourke-White of *Life* managed to join the fray and gradually won acceptance.

The incident of General George Patton slapping a soldier in Sicily is indicative of how World War II reporters stayed on the team. Visiting a field hospital, Patton had slapped a shell-shocked soldier he thought was shirking his duty. Reporters witnessed the slapping. Edward Kennedy of AP tried to persuade Eisenhower that, since the news was bound to leak out, it ought to come from correspondents who were on the scene.

Ike said that he personally felt such a disclosure would be of great value to the enemy as propaganda, and made a personal request to the reporters to sit on it. And they did. Drew Pearson finally broke the story in Washington three months later.

In the first desperate days of the Korean conflict, there was no military censorship, and reporters freely wrote about despair and disorganization as U.S. forces suffered battlefield setbacks. Marguerite Higgins and Homer Bigart, both of the *New York Herald Tribune* (they loathed each other), won Pulitzer Prizes in Korea in a bitter rivalry. Censorship became total after the front set-

tled down for the long negotiation along the cease-fire line. Correspondents were not allowed to talk to negotiators. Information was confined to a daily briefing by the United Nations command. But for all the difficulties, most reporters signed on to the notion that the press and the military were on the same side. "The correspondents in Korea were still awash in the patriotic fever of World War II," wrote James Greenfield of *The New York Times* forty years after the war. Few reporters "expended any ink debating whether the U.S. should be waging a war in Korea at all . . ."

Not so in Vietnam. At first correspondents there were inclined to support the American effort, even if they weren't "on the team." Later they questioned the

the mounting number of South Vietnamese defeats.

Tet, the countrywide attack in 1968 during a Vietnamese holiday, was the war's turning point and remains mired in controversy. Did the press over-react spreading doom and gloom? Was Tet only a temporary setback for the war effort, or did it expose the official American optimism as a fraud? The Viet Cong were decimated, but Tet showed that the light at the end of the tunnel was an illusion. Americans began to question whether the war was winnable at any cost the country was willing to pay. After Tet, America began trying to disengage rather than win.

Television by now was the main source of information for most Americans, and the images on the screen — at first in black and white — changed war reporting forever. Morley Safer's exposé of American soldiers burning a village had a huge impact on viewers at home, and added to the military's mistrust of reporters. But there was never any official censorship. In Vietnam correspondents were made honorary majors — World War II reporters had the momentary rank of captain — and could travel anywhere on military transport if space were available. The only condition: that they not betray troop movements, a request that was respected. The press battles were over misleading briefings in Saigon and Washington, which ran contrary to what the reporters could see for themselves in the field.

In Cambodia, Sidney Schanberg reporting for *The New York Times* caught the eventual decline and fall of the American-sponsored republic as did no other. He was one of the few eyewitnesses to the fall of Phnom Penh and the beginning of the unparalleled horror visited upon Cambodia. In both Laos and Cambodia, a censorship-at-source was imposed by the American embassies trying to keep reporters ignorant of what was going on. Sylvana Foa of UPI broke the story that the American Embassy in Phnom Penh was directing airstrikes over Cambodia — a level of involvement the embassy had denied — by buying a cheap radio that could pick up the frequencies the pilots and the embassy were using.

To this day, some military men glumly insist that television and the press lost the



**Women war correspondents in England, 1943.**  
From left: Helen Kirkpatrick, *Chicago Daily News*; Lev Miller, *Vogue*; Tania Long, *The New York Times*

war itself. Towards the end, radicalized by the sixties, some saw the American military as oppressors and imperialists — an attitude the military never forgave.

Early on, young reporters such as David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan of *The New York Times*, and Malcolm Browne of AP, battled military officials who, at first, hoped to conceal the extent of the growing American involvement, and then wanted the press to minimize

war in Vietnam by demoralizing the home front. The case for the correspondents was best made by James Reston of *The New York Times*. "In the long history of the war," he wrote, "the reporters have been more honest with the American people than the officials." But the U.S. military would never again allow such access to its operations as it did in Vietnam.

In 1983 the United States invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada in an effort to prevent what the U.S. government perceived as a Marxist threat to the hemisphere. Unlike the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, reporters were excluded entirely from the invasion force. (Some reporters — notably Bernard Dietrich of *Time* — managed to get onto the embattled island by hiring boats. Dietrich was able to hear military communiqués on radio describing events he knew had not happened.) After a firestorm of complaints, the Pentagon adopted a pool system to be activated the next time U.S. troops went into action. Its first test was the so-called tanker war in the eighties when selected reporters were allowed aboard Navy ships escorting oil tankers through the Persian Gulf. "That pool system was preferable to the alternative," says the AP's Richard Pyle, which would have meant news-by-Pentagon-briefing with no reporters on site.

**T**he pool arrangement for the invasion of Panama in 1989 was a disaster. When troops were sent in to arrest President Manuel Noriega, the press pool "arrived in Panama City after the main U.S. strikes were over and then were kept locked in briefing rooms for hours," says Steven Komarow, who was there for the AP. "Only when things had quieted down to sporadic gunfire and some looting were we exposed to daylight." Adding injury to insult, Komarow recalls, the military then used the presence of the pool as justification for barring other reporters from the scene.

The Somalia operation of 1992-1993 was a television-driven event from beginning to end. TV news images of starving Somalis drove the Bush administration to intervene, and television's coverage of a dead American pilot being dragged through the streets brought the intervention to a close under President Clinton. The enduring image of the

initial landing was American assault troops crawling up the beaches at night with TV crews crawling backwards ahead of them, filming every move.

In Haiti, 1994-1995, the American intervention was marked by cooperation — "by far the most cordial and workable press-army relationship I have been involved in," says Douglas Farah of *The Washington Post*.

But Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and Haiti were small sideshows compared to the dramatic, pyrotechnic air war by U.S. and allied forces over Iraq, followed by four days of intense fighting known as the gulf war. It was the biggest U.S. military operation since Vietnam, but in terms of press restrictions, it was the worst. The ground rules: no reporting of

simply by ignoring them, or attaching themselves to foreign armies. For example, Michael Kelly, stringing for *The New Republic* and *The Boston Globe*, joined Egyptian forces. The most respected newsmen in the country, Walter Cronkite, rose out of retirement to complain before Congress that the unprecedented press restrictions "trampled on the public's right to know," while the Pentagon insisted that a modern, fast-moving war could not possibly accommodate unlimited numbers of reporters in battle.

Once the shooting began, however, restrictions fell away. Tony Clifton of *Newsweek* rode into Desert Storm combat with the American tanks, a feat that no reporter achieved in the desert war

against General Erwin Rommel in World War II. Clifton described an Iraqi tank that "disintegrated into enormous fragments; the turret, weighing several tons, flew twenty feet into the air like the lid of a giant garbage can. The tracers set off black and scarlet fireballs and brilliant white showers as gas-storage tanks and munitions went up. A strong wind was blowing from behind us, so we rushed ahead wreathed in the black and white smoke from our burning quarry."

But mostly, in those final one hundred hours, the gulf war was a nightmare of censorship, limited access, and bungled pools. The pendulum that allowed unfettered freedom to report the news in Vietnam had swung sharply back towards controlling the news. George Esper, who led the Associated Press's war coverage from Saudi Arabia, says that the military followed "a pattern obviously designed to hide the horrors of war, especially American casualties."

But this time, the press was just not going to take it anymore. After heavy pressure from news organizations, the Pentagon agreed to new guidelines — no pools unless there is no other feasible way of accommodating the press; journalists to be provided access to military units; public affairs officers to act as



Correspondents at "The Five O'Clock Follies" in Saigon. Front row: Pham Xuan An, *Time*; Seymour Topping, *The New York Times*; Second row: Neil Sheehan, *The New York Times*; Malcolm Browne, AP; Third row (with glasses): Keyes Beech, *Chicago Daily News*

troop movements, and no access to battle zones except in organized groups of pool reporters and cameramen. Unauthorized visits to combat units could result in a lifting of press credentials. Dispatches and film would be censored, but only — the Pentagon promised — for military security, not to avoid criticism or embarrassment.

But the 1,600 U.S. reporters in the war zone at the height of the fighting were so curtailed that not even interviews with nurses and doctors in rear areas were permitted without military escorts. The American public was dependent for its news on military briefings far from the scene, which the military conducted with great skill. During the lead-up to the shooting war, some reporters got around the restrictions

liaisons but not to interfere with reporting; field commands to permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft whenever feasible. Said the AP's president Louis Boccardi: "The guidelines offer the promise of the kind of coverage the citizens of a democracy are entitled to have, while they also recognize the need for security ground rules in combat zones."

In place now is a Department of Defense National Media Pool, representing television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and wire services. Its forty-four members are rotated on a regular basis. It is by necessity Washington-based, as the "deployables" (as the Defense Department calls them), will have only four hours to get to Andrews Air Force base when a military operation is about to occur. They will not be told where they are going.

In the years since the press reported on Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill, war coverage has experienced breathtaking changes. First radio, and then television arrived to take away the ascendancy of print, and now the Internet is emerging as a reporting tool. Reporters today are freed from the need to find a telegraph

office or even a telephone line to get their stories out. Words and film can be transmitted by satellite, and the equipment needed to perform this technological wizardry is getting smaller and cheaper. No longer will reporters spend more time finding a way to file than reporting the news.

Gender discrimination is no longer tenable. Imagine Christiane Amanpour putting up with behind-the-lines assignments that were forced on Peggy Hull in 1918.

On the negative side, few reporters today have any background in military matters. Since the end of conscription, a generation of Americans has grown up without having served in the military, and this contributes to the widening gulf between reporters and soldiers. But for all the technology, reporting, and photographing, war still means living dangerously and occasionally dying young. In all, more than fifty U.S. newspeople have been killed in the U.S. combat actions since the end of World War II.

The tension between the military and the press will never cease, because both need each other, but cannot grant the other what it really wants. Absolute free-

dom to print or film everything is not possible in wartime, nor is it possible in a democracy to turn the media into organs of state propaganda.

In the century's final year the U.S. military was at war again, this time in the Balkans, and the press protested yet again that the flow of information was too rigidly controlled. In April, news executives from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, NBC, AP, CNN, and *The Wall Street Journal* wrote Secretary of Defense William Cohen complaining that the flow of news from the Balkan campaign was being even more tightly held than in the gulf war. "We of course recognize your need to withhold information that would jeopardize ongoing military operations . . .," the editors wrote. "But, at a minimum we believe that the department should make public its information on what targets in Yugoslavia have been hit . . ."

Richard Harding Davis made the same point in 1914. Speaking for all the century's combat correspondents, he wrote: In war "the world has a right to know, not what is going to happen next, but at least what has happened." Some things never change. ■

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# Iphigene's Ashes

by Jonathan Z. Larsen

In 1990, when Iphigene Sulzberger, the beloved matriarch of *The New York Times*, died in her sleep, the family was devastated. Iphigene had held the family together through the death of her father, Adolph Ochs, who had bought the paper in 1896, and later that of her husband, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, who had followed Adolph as publisher of the paper. Even at the age of ninety-seven she had remained the moral compass and warm embrace not just for her direct descendants but an entire extended family of distant relatives, including ex-wives and ex-husbands. Without her, it was not at all clear the family's center would hold. No one was more affected by her death than her son Arthur Ochs ("Punch") Sulzberger, who now became the new head of family. Yet only two days later, just hours after Iphigene had been cremated, Punch

happened to run into a *Times* staffer who was wearing an Ash Wednesday smudge on her forehead. "Oh dear!" said Punch. "I hope that isn't Mother!"

The staffer was far more shocked by Punch's flippancy than is the reader of this engrossing biography of the Sulzberger clan. By the time one reaches Iphigene's death deep into *The Trust*, one has long since become accustomed to the family's odd sense of humor, as well as its generous dollop of sangfroid.

A normally private, even circumspect family, the Sulzbergers come fully alive in these pages — jammed as they are with court intrigue and succession struggles, tortured and equivocal feelings around the family's Jewish heritage, and a rare gift for self-deprecating humor and rapier wit. Finally, with this epic biography, the Sulzbergers take their proper place in the pantheon of New York City's greatest families. Once, following the publica-

Jonathan Z. Larsen is a former editor of *New Times* and *The Village Voice*.



Line of succession, 1951: Arthur Hays Sulzberger, right; Arthur Ochs (Punch) Sulzberger, left; and middle, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.

Sulzbergers had the responsibility of holding the reins not just of a very good newspaper but the best newspaper. And they managed to succeed where the Bingham failed.

It is hard to comprehend that such entertaining characters own and run such a buttoned-down, sedate newspaper. For

tion of one of *The New York Times*'s breakthrough pieces of journalism — Abe Raskin's 1963 cold-blooded dissection of the 114-day newspaper strike — the acerbic press critic A.J. Liebling wrote: "I doff my bowler." One is tempted here to doff one's bowler both to the Sulzberger family and their biographers for conspiring together in this absorbing tale. Though it is clear from the outset that *The Trust* is not an authorized biography, it nonetheless bespeaks of a level of access to sources and documents that in itself is remarkable.

Tift, a former associate editor of *Time*, and Jones, her husband, a Pulitzer Prize-winning press reporter for the *Times*, seem unusually well prepared for this daunting task. Their first book, *The Patriarch: The Rise and Fall of the Bingham Dynasty*, told the story of an equally colorful family in control of another highly regarded newspaper, the Louisville *Courier-Journal*. But the

## THE TRUST: THE PRIVATE AND POWERFUL FAMILY BEHIND THE NEW YORK TIMES

BY SUSAN E. TIFFT AND ALEX S. JONES  
LITTLE BROWN & COMPANY  
896 PP \$29.95

openers, there is Adolph Ochs himself, almost a parody of a Horatio Alger hero: job at the age of eleven, walking four miles a day, supporting his family at fourteen, publisher of *The Chattanooga Daily Times* at twenty, and owner of *The New York Times* at thirty-eight. A tireless self-promoter with a streak of P. T. Barnum and a talent for flimflam, Adolph was not above



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cooking the circulation and revenue numbers, keeping major investors from public view, and accidentally pressing himself upon women in the corridors. The authors argue that the family trait of modesty and restraint began with Adolph ("riches, renown, and power had never been central concerns"), but perhaps in this instance they are being too kind. Elsewhere they refer to Adolph as a "huckster," note his "hubris" and quote a confession to his cousin: "My ambition has taken possession of me. I see myself living in luxury, honored and respected by all." Indeed, the book opens with a gloomy and septuagenarian Adolph inspecting the stone mausoleum in which he will soon lay (designed by the architects of the Empire State Building to hold as many as eighteen relatives, with six above ground) and contemplating his epitaph: "None knew thee but to love thee/None named thee but to praise."

Iphigene, Adolph's only child, was never even considered as a possible successor to her father, a life-long opponent of women's suffrage. When she secretly secured an entry-level job at the *Times* with the help of the managing editor, she said, Adolph "was enraged and nearly murdered both of us." For the sake of family peace, she tolerated her father's sexism and later her husband Arthur's flagrant affairs, but she quietly kept score and was not above making the following wistful remark at the dinner honoring Arthur's twentieth anniversary as publisher: "If I'd been the boss's son instead of his daughter, this party might have been for me instead of you." Iphigene led such a comfortable life that her grandchildren suspected that she did not know toast came from bread, but she was aware of everything going on at the *Times*, and when she did not like it, would write letters to the editor under the names of deceased relatives.

Husband Arthur, who would go on to make a great success out of his reign, was a wondrously complex and artistic man, a dashing, moody sophisticate possessed of a "withering wit," who composed poems to his children (most of them barbed) as well as his mistresses (loving). Near death, he left Iphigene instructions to send \$1,000 checks to several friends from the paper with the note, "Thanks. It was fun!" Due to Arthur's wise management, the *Times* was a more financially secure paper than the one he had been handed. He had invested

in a paper mill that would see the paper through the Depression, and violated Adolph's strictures against strong editorial positions by campaigning tirelessly to break American isolationism on the eve of WWII. In the late '30s, the paper encouraged U.S. citizens to defend "a way of life" by helping Europe fight Hitler, and later by endorsing the draft. At the height of the war, the *Times* fielded fifty-five overseas correspondents, more than any other paper. The one mark against the paper's wartime performance was its stubborn refusal to fully acknowledge the plight of European Jews. Because Adolph Ochs had never wanted the *Times* to appear to be a "Jewish" newspaper, the *Times's* front-page account of the 1945 liberation of Dachau "never mentioned the word *Jew*." Three years later, the paper also declined to endorse Israel's declaration of independence.

Arthur and Iphigene's only son, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, began life very inauspiciously, with his grandfather Adolph peering down at the wrinkled infant and declaring, "The poor child hasn't a chance. He can't possibly turn out well." Unprepossessing and academically challenged, Punch salvaged his own self-esteem by joining the Marines. Forced to apply himself, he excelled, and within weeks of his arrival was promoted to corporal. Unbeknownst to him, he was kept out of combat during World War II by a conspiracy between his father and General MacArthur, but he nonetheless gained enough confidence to follow his destiny. Once, when he was asked to substitute for his father as a speaker at a charity event, he "dutifully went through the motions, but when he got home and took off his suit, he discovered he was covered with hives — only under his clothes, where it wouldn't show." It was left to his daughter Karen to draw the Ochsian moral: "Now, that's control."

After a slow start, Punch began to bring the *Times* into the modern world, with budgets, goals, a more streamlined management, and a four-section paper. The *Times's* superb reporting on the Vietnam War, culminating in the release of the Pentagon Papers, was largely due to Punch's own resolute support of his correspondents and editors. During the city's economic downturns in the '70s and again at the end of the '80s, he invested more rather than less money in the news operation. In the metaphor of Abe Rosenthal, the brilliant but "tem-

peramental" editor who presided during much of Punch's reign, Punch "put more tomatoes in the soup." As a result the *Times* emerged from each period far stronger than newspapers around the country that had pinched editorial pennies. On Punch's watch (1963-92), the *Times* picked up nearly one-half of its seventy-seven Pulitzer Prizes.

When first introduced to the current publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., the reader can be forgiven for despairing. Born in 1951, Arthur Jr. was both a child of divorce and a child of the sixties. He drove motorcycles, dressed in leather, and got arrested at anti-war sit-ins. Later he would affect "fashionable jackets, striped shirts, colorful suspenders, and cigars." Unlike his father Punch, who was reserved and even self-effacing, son Arthur was aggressive bordering on obstreperous, an almost fopish young man of myriad affectations, one of which was his identification with the working classes. During his first year as publisher, he held his first annual staff meeting, at which one employee stood up to complain about the company's 401K plan. Arthur Jr. "scoffed" and asked the man his age. When the answer was forty, Arthur Jr. shot back: "Hell, I'm forty-two and I'm not worried about a 401K yet."

One associate, watching Arthur Jr. trying to establish his own identity at the *Times*, suggested that he needed to "go back in the oven and bake a little longer." But the job of *Times* publisher is a crucible into which both Arthur Jr.'s grandfather and father entered tremulous and awestruck, only to emerge as seasoned and laudable figures. On the strength of *The Trust*, one can only hope the same for Arthur Jr. His one major news call so far — the publication of the Unabomber's manifesto — is hard to evaluate.

This chain of Arthurs was broken only once, and briefly. Aging and ill-tempered, Arthur Hays Sulzberger in 1961 had finally turned the job of publisher over to Orvil Dryfoos, a former stockbroker and the husband of his eldest child, Marian. Orvil, genial and well-loved by both the Sulzberger family and the *Times* staff, was cautious and insecure to a fault, qualities one family was attributed in part to the fact that he was a "son-in-law of a son-in-law." When the printers struck for 114 days beginning in December, 1962, Orvil and his execu-

tives, who were leading the negotiations on behalf of all the papers, made all the wrong moves. When it was over, four New York City newspapers out of seven had gone under, the *Times* had been crippled, and Orvil was literally heartbroken. Born with an enlarged heart, he collapsed under the pressure of his job — he was running both the edit and business sides, "an impossible task" and something no one had attempted since Adolph. Less than two months after the strike ended, Orvil was dead.

Looking backward, it may seem inevitable that the line of succession at

## In the Sulzberger family, there is nothing worse than being regarded as having a "swelled head"

the *Times* would be so rigorously Arthurian. But the succession battles were never so obvious or easy. Tafft and Jones, indeed, make the battles for succession one of the many engines that drive this book along so briskly. At any given point, there were various aspirants and pretenders, in and out of the family. And the press could always be counted to listen to the wrong inside sources and name the wrong heir apparent. For instance, there was Cy Sulzberger, a nephew to Arthur Hays Sulzberger, and, for a time, a great asset to the paper. "Tall, craggy, brilliant, with a booming voice," Cy joined the *Times* days before the invasion of Poland and before the end of the war had become the chief foreign correspondent. He was almost as swashbuckling in reality as he was in his own mind.

Overbearing and occasionally insufferable, Cy eventually wore out his welcome, and perhaps it was just as well. The authors quote this astonishing passage from Cy's diary: "I realized with horror that in all my long life I had never done a single thing of which I could genuinely be proud: no act of true courage, generosity, sacrifice, or even pure kindness. It is appalling to contemplate."

Another family contender, in the eyes of many, was John Oakes, Adolph Ochs's equally brilliant nephew. Oakes' father,

Adolph's brother George, had changed the family name to Oakes because "he did not want his boys to be burdened, he explained, with 'an alien appellation . . . that will be anathema' in the future." Oakes fought in World War II, rising from private to major in army intelligence, earning in the process the Bronze Star and the Croix de Guerre.

Oakes would join the *Times* in 1946, work his way up to editorial page editor, and develop the op-ed page, now a staple of almost every self-respecting newspaper. He immediately enlivened the editorials — some thought far too much. A take-no-prisoners liberal and early voice for the environment, Oakes became a thorn in the side of the business community — not to mention the business side of the paper. In what would be referred to as Punch's "putsch," his cousin finally moved Oakes aside in 1977.

Then, of course, there were the "professional" outsiders who were convinced the paper should be left to them, as opposed to ill-trained amateurs from the family. Truth was, the *Times* desperately needed talented outsiders to run smoothly and profitably, and in principle the family even believed the right outsider could win the publisher's job — and more. But those who understood the family and its role at the paper did not want the job. And those who wanted it never understood that they had to work with the family, both above them and below them in hierarchy.

Nepotism is an inevitable theme that runs throughout the book. Sulzberger relatives were always welcome to try their hand at the paper — that is, if they were male (only now, under the reign of Arthur Jr., an ardent advocate of diversity, can it be assumed that female descendants are also welcome). But seldom was anything ever laid out clearly; training programs for the family ranged from abysmal to haphazard. Arthur Jr., who had the most rigorous apprenticeship of all, once quipped that the role of heir apparent was like "a womb with a view." The tension over the subject of nepotism between the outsiders and the family was often palpable.

There was, for instance, the moment when Walter Mattson, then the imposing general manager (and later president) of the Times Company, and one of the most successful "outsiders" the family had ever employed on the business side, took one of Iphigene's grandchildren, Stephen Golden, out to lunch to set him straight.

## BOOKS

Write the authors: "Mattson locked his blue eyes onto Stephen's face and said slowly but deliberately, emphasizing each word for effect, 'I don't like nepotism.' 'Me, neither,' Stephen replied cheerily, 'and your son better not ever ask me for a job here.'"

**T**he often unrealistic expectations and dashed hopes of Sulzberger family members played havoc on their marriages. *The Trust* is literally strewn with broken marriages and both public and secret affairs. In theory, family members were wealthy, but their money was tied up in the Ochs Trust, which held the

majority of voting stock as well as much of the family's real estate. No one seemed to know quite where they stood either in terms of their careers or their finances.

At the center of *The Trust* is the altogether improbable fact that the descendants of Adolph Ochs have been able to keep the paper not just prosperous but supreme among all daily newspapers in existence, cautiously passing control along from one generation to the next with grace and modesty.

There is an almost centrifugal force that tends to spin each generation of a dynasty farther apart. Somehow the Sulzbergers have resisted that force. The

authors attribute the family's success to "a communion of blood and purpose they all shared." Tifft and Jones describe three remarkable acts undertaken by the family as a whole that should preserve the Sulzbergers' ownership of the *Times* for generations to come.

In 1986, the four children of Iphigene and Arthur Hays Sulzberger, otherwise known as "the sibs," and their thirteen descendants, signed a covenant never to sell their critical voting Class B shares of Times stock outside of the family.

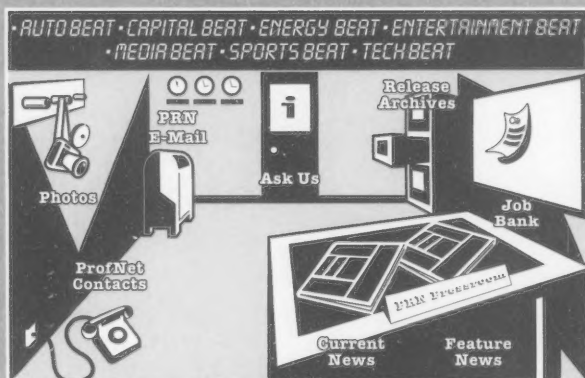
Then, in the early '90s, the cousins, their spouses and their grown children held a series of family meetings to advise "the sibs" on how they thought matters from training to succession should be handled. The result was a fifty-page volume titled *Proposals for the Future: To the Third Generation of the Ochs-Sulzberger Family from the Fourth and Fifth Generations*.

When Iphigene died, the Ochs Trust had been dissolved and broken out into four separate trusts, one for each branch of the family. But the fourth and fifth generations had other ideas. "Buried deep in the book of recommendations Punch and his sisters had received," write the authors, "was the cousins' stated wish to consider themselves members of one family, not members of four 'lines.'" The sibs complied, and the four trusts were recombined.

In the Sulzberger family, there is nothing worse than being regarded as having a "swelled head." By not trying to become too rich, or too influential, or too celebrated, they have kept both *The New York Times* and the family from spinning out of control. No one appreciated this sense of proportion and decorum better than Iphigene. The authors tell a wonderful anecdote that seems to encapsulate the Sulzberger family secret, not to mention its sense of humor. During the height of the Reagan administration, Punch, as publisher of the *Times*, was invited to have lunch with the president. He arrived to find not just Reagan but also Vice President Bush and Secretary of State George Shultz. As soon as he got back to the *Times* Washington bureau, he called his mother. "Mom, guess who I had lunch with?" Iphigene listened politely, according to the authors: "'Oh, Punch, that's wonderful!' she exclaimed and then, with the skilled timing of a comedienne, paused for a moment before asking what, to her, was the obvious question: 'What did they want, son?'" ■

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# First Principles

by Tom Goldstein

For the past several years, courts — not editors, not reporters, not owners — have played a pivotal role in establishing the professional standards that journalists must meet in doing their jobs. Because judges, particularly federal judges, have become the prime formulators of journalistic standards, news organizations — which feel compelled to defend themselves and their sister organizations in just about any circumstance — are often in awkward legal postures, defending unappealing (and sometimes horrific) facts.

In a recent example of this, Paladin Press, publisher of *Hit Man: A Technical Manual for Independent Contractors*, was sued for aiding and abetting three murders. The big media weighed in on the side of the publisher and the First Amendment. And the big media lost.

"That the national media organizations would feel obliged to vigorously defend Paladin's assertion of a constitutional right to intentionally and knowingly assist murderers with technical information which Paladin admits it intended and knew would be used immediately in the commission of murder and other crimes against society is, to say the least, breathtaking," Judge J. Michael Luttig of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals wrote in 1997, in permitting the suit against Paladin to go forward.

It is this lawsuit that forms the backdrop for *Deliberate Intent*, whose author, Rod Smolla, a law professor who considered himself a member of what he calls the "First Amendment in-crowd," rejected his roots and made pathbreaking law.

The facts underlying the *Hit Man* case are harrowing.

Early in the morning of March 3, 1993, Mildred Horn, a flight attendant for American Airlines, her severely disabled eight-year-old son Trevor, who required a life support system and round-the-clock care, and the child's nurse, Janice Saunders, were executed in Silver Spring, Maryland. The three

were murdered by a contract killer hired by Mildred's ex-husband, Lawrence, a one-time recording engineer for Motown Records, who hoped to inherit money paid to Trevor in settlement of a malpractice suit.

In separate trials, Lawrence Horn and the contract killer, James Edward Perry, an ex-convict from Detroit who described himself as "Spiritual Adviser, Case-Buster, Independent Contractor," were found guilty of the murders. At Perry's trial, the prosecutor showed the jury a chart listing twenty-two steps, taken directly from *Hit Man*, that were used to commit the murders, including tips on which gun to use, why it is important to shoot the victims in the eyes, and

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## DELIBERATE INTENT: A LAWYER TELLS THE TRUE STORY OF MURDER BY THE BOOK

BY ROD SMOLLA  
CROWN PUBLISHERS  
276 PP \$23

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how far away to stand from the targets in order to avoid the spattering of blood.

Ultimately, relatives of the three dead people sued the publisher of *Hit Man* in a civil suit. Their lead lawyer, Howard Siegel, who had negotiated the malpractice settlement for Trevor Horn, reached out for help to Rod Smolla, then teaching at the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at the College of William and Mary. A well-known First Amendment advocate, Smolla had written an amicus brief arguing that *Hustler* magazine had a constitutional right to publish a parody portraying Jerry Falwell having sex with his mother in an outhouse. That argument had been upheld by the Supreme Court.

For Smolla to change sides would be remarkable.

First Amendment lawyers are a special breed. Unlike many other lawyers who take on whatever cause is at hand, they are blessed with an almost messianic fervor for their cause. (They are also tightly knit: not long ago, the Libel Defense Resource Center, an important group of libel defense lawyers, suspended Martin Garbus for switching sides and representing a plaintiff in her suit against a reporter.)

So it was natural that at first Smolla resisted Siegel's request to become co-counsel in the Paladin suit. "To be sure, I felt emotionally drawn to the families, impelled to their cause by the pulls of sympathy and empathy. Their grief was devastating. Their outrage overpowering. But this was asking too much. All my life I had defended the rights of publishers. This felt like nothing less than betrayal."

Still, viscerally — "in my heart," he writes — he knew that the First Amendment could not be interpreted to protect a book like *Hit Man*. "We would not be attempting to punish Paladin Press for publishing unpopular or offensive ideas," Smolla writes, almost as if he is not yet fully convinced of the correctness of his position. "We would simply be attempting to hold it responsible for aiding and abetting murder by training, counseling, encouraging, and inciting hit men, with *deliberate intent*." And so, his moral dilemma, his fear of being branded "a traitor" notwithstanding, Smolla signed on with Siegel.

As it turned out, the suit against Paladin Press and its publisher, Peder Lund (whose former partner, Robert Brown, founded *Soldier of Fortune* magazine) for aiding and abetting the murders never went to trial. A settlement was reached last May 21. Paladin agreed to stop selling *Hit Man* and to pay millions of dollars to the victims' families.

Smolla and his co-counsel had won a major victory. But his book leaves the reader with an insufficient idea of why he was so bothered about suing a publisher or why defenders of the First Amendment had any case at all. (For purposes of the trial, Paladin conceded *Hit Man* would be used by murderers for hire.)

In a conversation with Siegel, Smolla remarks: "There's this constitutional conceit you sometimes sense within the First Amendment in-crowd, a holy certitude that suits against magazines, newspapers, and publishers are always wrong, and in the end are usually doomed. First Amendment zealots start believing so much in the First Amendment that they can start to imbue it with an aura of invincibility."

But he does not elaborate on other circumstances in which the media should lose, and, perhaps because he is a bit defensive about the switch in his allegiance, he gives shorter shrift than he should to the arguments of his oppo-

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Tom Goldstein is dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Ariel Hart, who graduated from the school in 1999, assisted in this review.

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## BOOKS

nents. Airily dismissing the amicus briefs as containing "no knockout punches," he provides no quotes from the brief of the major news organizations that Judge Luttig of the Fourth Circuit found so "breathtaking" in its audacity.

Inspecting that brief, filed in 1997 on behalf of many big media companies and organizations — among them, ABC, America Online, the Magazine Publishers of America, the National Association of Broadcasters, the Newspaper Association of America, The New York Times Company, and the Washington Post Company — one finds potent (if ultimately unsuccessful) arguments.

On a rhetorical level, the brief reminds the court that "it is most often the speech at the fringes of American life that defines the freedoms for those at the center." On a factual level, it notes that Perry waited more than a year after purchasing *Hit Man* before he carried out the contract killing, "providing ample time for reflection and reconsideration on his part." Smolla did not include this inconvenient fact in his book.

The brief recites a list of books and movies on "lethal subjects." *The Godfather*, for instance, includes a scene that describes how to remove serial numbers from guns; *The Exterminator* instructs moviegoers how to fill hollow-point bullets with mercury "to increase deadly efficiency." The brief then warns that if the plaintiffs prevail, "no expression — music, video, books, even newspaper articles — would be safe from civil liability." (That prediction has not yet come to pass.)

Besides failing to give First Amendment absolutists their due, the book has other shortcomings. Smolla includes far too many lengthy passages in which he and his students engage in spirited colloquies about the law. These conversations, which clearly are not verbatim even if they are bracketed in quotation marks, come across as contrived and hokey.

As for the author, Smolla has changed teaching jobs, winding up at the University of Richmond. Despite all his hand-wringing about being ostracized from his first calling, near the end he tells how he was approached by *The New York Times* about the possibility of writing an amicus brief on behalf of a number of news organizations in a case involving press access to sealed court records.

Smolla accepted the offer. ■

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## BOOK REPORTS

### **DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER: HOW OUR GROWING HATRED OF THE MEDIA THREATENS FREE SPEECH FOR ALL OF US**

BY BRUCE W. SANFORD. THE FREE PRESS.  
257 PP. \$25.

**B**ruce Sanford, a lawyer who deals with First Amendment cases, seems to be sore at nearly everybody — at the news media for misfeasance and for failing to defend their rights, at the public for failing to understand the invaluable services the news media perform, but most of all at the courts. The judicial system, he complains, is gradually devaluing the battery of press rights set in place by Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan and his colleagues in the 1960s and 1970s. But Sanford is so intent on sounding the alarm that he leaves a misleading impression that once upon a time the courts sanctioned a whole panoply of intrusive newsgathering practices, some of them bordering on criminal trespass. Hardly so; newsgathering rights, as opposed to the right to publish, have always been on shaky legal and constitutional ground. But no doubt the Supreme Court's decision on May 24 that reporters who ride along with police may be liable for invasion of privacy will only confirm Sanford's belief that doomsday is near.

### **WARP SPEED: AMERICA IN THE AGE OF MIXED MEDIA**

BY BILL KOVACH AND TOM ROSENSTIEL.  
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION. 193 PP.  
\$24.95. \$10.95 PAPER.

**D**espite the windy title, this volume is a straight-ahead lecture telling American journalism just where and how it went off the tracks during the Year of Monica and why it earned public disdain. Kovach and Rosenstiel are reformers by trade — Kovach curator of the Harvard-based Nieman Foundation for Journalism, Rosenstiel a press critic and director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, a reform group founded in 1997. Drawing on analyses by Rosenstiel's organization, they picture a journalism that largely lost sight of its chief reason for existence — seeking to discern and report the truth — in a welter of poor documentation, copycat reporting, and from-the-hip opinion. They particularly

condemn journalists who appeared on the all-Monica cable channels to join the cacophony, the "argument culture." Their proposals for change do not sound radical but will be difficult to carry out, for they suggest that news organizations try to think in advance about policies that will help them remain focused on truth-seeking when under stress, and then try to see that these policies are understood throughout the organization — starting with an old piece of advice offered by Michael Oreskes, Washington bureau chief at *The New York Times*: "Do your own work."

### **THE WOMEN WHO WROTE THE WAR**

BY NANCY CALDWELL SOREL. ARCADE  
PUBLISHING. 464 PP. \$27.95.

**T**hose who believe the pioneering generation of women journalists did not arrive until the 1970s should read this rich account of the band who covered World War II, often in the face of opposition by colleagues and by the military, and frequently at heavy cost to their personal lives. Some of the names are celebrated — Margaret Bourke-White, Martha Gellhorn, Marguerite Higgins — but such lesser-knowns as Helen Kirkpatrick, Virginia Cowles, Iris Carpenter, and many more are worth the space given them here. Nor were their roles peripheral. Sometimes relegated to covering hospitals and nurses, they found ways to bend or break regulations to get to the heart of the action. Sorel provides a kaleidoscopic narrative, based on interviews, oral histories, and memoirs. It is sometimes hard to follow. But the tale is nonetheless worth following to the end. If you wish to read outstanding stories by these women, you can find them generously represented in *The Library of America's* two-volume anthology, *Reporting World War II* (1995).

### **E.W. SCRIPPS AND THE BUSINESS OF NEWSPAPERS**

BY GERALD J. BALDASTY. UNIVERSITY OF  
ILLINOIS PRESS. 220 PP. \$42.50. \$16.95  
PAPER.

**T**he newspapers and syndicates founded by Edward Willis Scripps (1854-1926) had an enduring reputation for stinginess. One former employee of the Newspaper Enterprise Association

syndicate remembers having to glue pencil stubs onto new pencils so as to extend their useful life. This study by Gerald Baldasty of the University of Washington, based on Scripps business correspondence that became available in 1990, shows that miserliness was no accident. Scripps newspapers were founded with little capital and, like birds kicked out of the nest, had to make their own way from the start with used equipment, low wages, and rationed toilet paper. But penny-pinching was not the whole strategy. Scripps aimed to soak up working-class readers neglected by established papers and to rely on them rather than on advertisers. In fact, he avoided department-store advertising because the stores always wanted favors. As long as he was in charge, moreover, the content of the papers reflected working-class interests — coverage of labor unions, public-health reforms, and muckraking of the trusts. Ultimately, the papers Scripps founded joined the mainstream, but Baldasty finds in the tight Scripps management a precedent for today's successful chains.

### **THE DENT UNIFORM EDITION OF DICKENS' JOURNALISM, VOL. 3: "GONE ASTRAY" AND OTHER PAPERS FROM HOUSEHOLD WORDS 1851-1859**

BY MICHAEL SLATER, ED. OHIO STATE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS. 542 PP. \$50.

**T**his ample volume, published jointly by Ohio State and J.M. Dent of London, offers the bulk of what Charles Dickens wrote for his magazine, *Household Words*, during the 1850s, while he was also somehow writing, for serialization, the novels *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*. By present-day standards, Dickens's journalistic style is lavish and ornate rather than terse. Yet his comments on politics and society entertain and amuse. One plum is "The Best Authority" (June 20, 1857) — as in "We have it on the best authority" — being a forerunner of the present-day "Sources Say." He portrays the Best Authority as a single individual omnipresent at dinner parties and clubs, on both sides of the lines in the Crimean War, and recounts his futile efforts to track him down.

James Boylan

# Dowd's Diary

by Mike Hoyt

**D**ear Diary,  
Well, it's September already and here they come, the parade of contenders. I've floated some preliminary nicknames already — the Tin Man for Al Gore ("immobile, rusting, decent, badly in need of that oil can"). The Scarecrow for George W. ("charming, limber, cocky, fidgety, seeking to stuff his head with a few more weighty thoughts"). I'll sharpen them up, Diary. Lots of material this time: McCain and Bradley, Nurse Ratchet following behind. And, my God, Hillary and Rudy; I'll do some columns from inside their minds. I'll have plenty to write.

It's just that . . . I'll tell you what's bothering me a little. The critics. They turn me into a symbol of all that's wrong with politics and journalism. I'm not sure the Pulitzer helped, you know? It was priceless, of course. The editors love me even more than before. Did you see the *Times's* nominating letter? "The most creative and influential columnist of her generation . . . A journalistic original operating at the very top of her game . . . An absolutely brilliant year on the year's biggest story." Whoa! (You saw my reaction quote, Diary? "I'm just so grateful to President Clinton that he never spoke the words, 'Young Lady, pull down that jacket and get back to the typing pool.'" I admit I rehearsed it).

But that prize draws critics like wine draws bees, and they can sting. Did you see that guy in *Feed* magazine? Jeez. "The problem with Dowd isn't that she lacks beliefs, or that she values style over content. It's that Dowd's values are those of the Society Page, and her questions too narrow to encompass the whole of our nation's public life." (Didn't see him? Good. Probably nobody else did, either, except some online kids.) And then there's Joe Klein, quoted in *Brill's Content* saying all my columns are a "pose." Mr. Anonymous, lecturing about pretense.

I know what the critics say. That I'm too cynical. That I reduce politics to personality and trivialize it. That I reflect the received wisdom of the media elite.

What do they want, Flora Lewis? A female Abe Rosenthal? (Can you *imagine*, Diary?) An analysis of campaign-finance reform? A report on the lack of dental care for the snaggle-toothed masses? *Please*. Not from me. I do character, the Players. I don't do welfare or Albanians or the EPA. You know, lots of these folks like me just fine when I'm on their side of something or somebody. You *go* girl, they say. Pour it on.

Then there are my so-called friends, like Michael Kinsley. "Her column is perfectly suited to our time," he says in that dumb *Brill's* piece. "Every period in time has its columnists, and now she is ours." Hmmm. Does that sound like a com-

pliment to you, Diary? Our time kind of sucks, no? Truth be told, I liked it better back when Washington worked. When my brothers were altar boys. When Barbara Stanwyck and Katharine Hepburn were in the movies. Am I a reactionary, Diary? Nah. I'm a standard bearer. Somebody has to pay for letting the country rot. Somebody's got to hold the politicians' feet to the fire. Who else but us journalists? No, most of my critics are so far off base.

Yet . . . to you, Diary, and to you only, I'll discuss this little riff of Irish guilt. The Lord made me dark Irish. I have — How did Mary Gordon put it? — "a taste for condemnation like a taste for salt." I'm not ashamed of that. I like salt. He gave me the touch of the poet, too, which I have put to fine use. But the other part of Irish is Irish guilt. You know, the Jews have nothing on us in that department.

I admit it. I do seem to get away too easily with a certain trick. I simultaneously sock and celebrate a subject. Tina Brown has a frothy party for the politico-celeb set and her new magazine? I disdain it, paragraph after paragraph, as I give it lots of buzzy attention. Dick Morris passes along hot but unsubstantiated speculation about Hillary's sex life? Beneath comment, of course, and I condemn him in a column. But as I do I slip the rumor into the paper of record.

I decry the shallowness and meanness of politicians and political discussion as I lovingly delineate the shallowness and meanness, kind of roll around in it. I have this radar for the flaws of the high and mighty (which, in a way, gives me a beat similar to that of *The National Enquirer*). The Monica mess was thus, of course, perfect. I CAT-scanned its true shabbiness like nobody else. I crystallized our national disappointment. I loved every moment of it. I fear I'm going to miss it, which, of course, contributes to this frisson of guilt.

I know. I know. I could spend a little more time writing about things that might actually make a difference to all those Americans who live, I hear, out there beyond the Washington/New York bubble. To some shoe salesman in Akron or some night nurse in San Diego or some science teacher in Brownsville. I could try to elevate the discussion just an inch and still have a little fun and malice. I guess.

Okay, okay. Here comes a new political season, and I promise to try. Thank you, Diary. You are my conscience, after all. I feel better having had this discussion. I'll widen my parameters.

Don't get your hopes up too high though. After all, I don't make our politics, I just reflect them. I'm a mirror, really. A good one. Here they come again, the contenders. I hope they live down to my expectations.

Yours truly,  
Maureen ♦

Mike Hoyt (mh151@columbia.edu) is CJR's senior editor.



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# The Lower case

## FBI involved in murder of Iraqi family

Washington (N.C.) Daily News 6/2/99

## Nurse jailed in shooting used heroin

Houston Chronicle 6/21/99

## Leaky condo owners demand help from Ottawa

The Globe and Mail (Toronto) 6/23/99

## Pope remembers shooting victims

The New World (Chicago) 4/25/99

But such narrow-mindedness is common to the PGA Tour, which went to court to bar Casey Martin from using a cart, despite clear evidence of a degenerative circulatory disease in one of his right legs.

The New York Times 8/3/99

### Ellie Reed Ritzville, Wash.

Graveside service for Ellie Reed, 88, will be at 1 p.m. Thursday at Emmanuel Lutheran Cemetery in Ritzville. Danekas Funeral Home in Ritzville is in charge of arrangements.

Mrs. Reed, who was born in Florida, died Friday.

She moved to Ritzville in 1954 from Spokane.

She was a self-employed junk dealer.

While living in Spokane, Mrs. Reed was a member of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church.

The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.) 3/16/99

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The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.) 3/17/99

## Gary Coleman makes a fine court appearance

Journal Star (Peoria, Ill.) 7/28/99

## Former Cowboys tackle Tody Smith at age 50

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, Va.) 7/20/99



## Programs to thwart elder abuse announced

Los Angeles Daily News 7/16/99

*Cinco de Mayo is the perfect opportunity to indulge in your passion for Mexican quinine*

The Doings (Hinsdale, Ill.) 5/5/99

## Privacy concerns dog banking industry

Minneapolis Star-Tribune 6/16/99

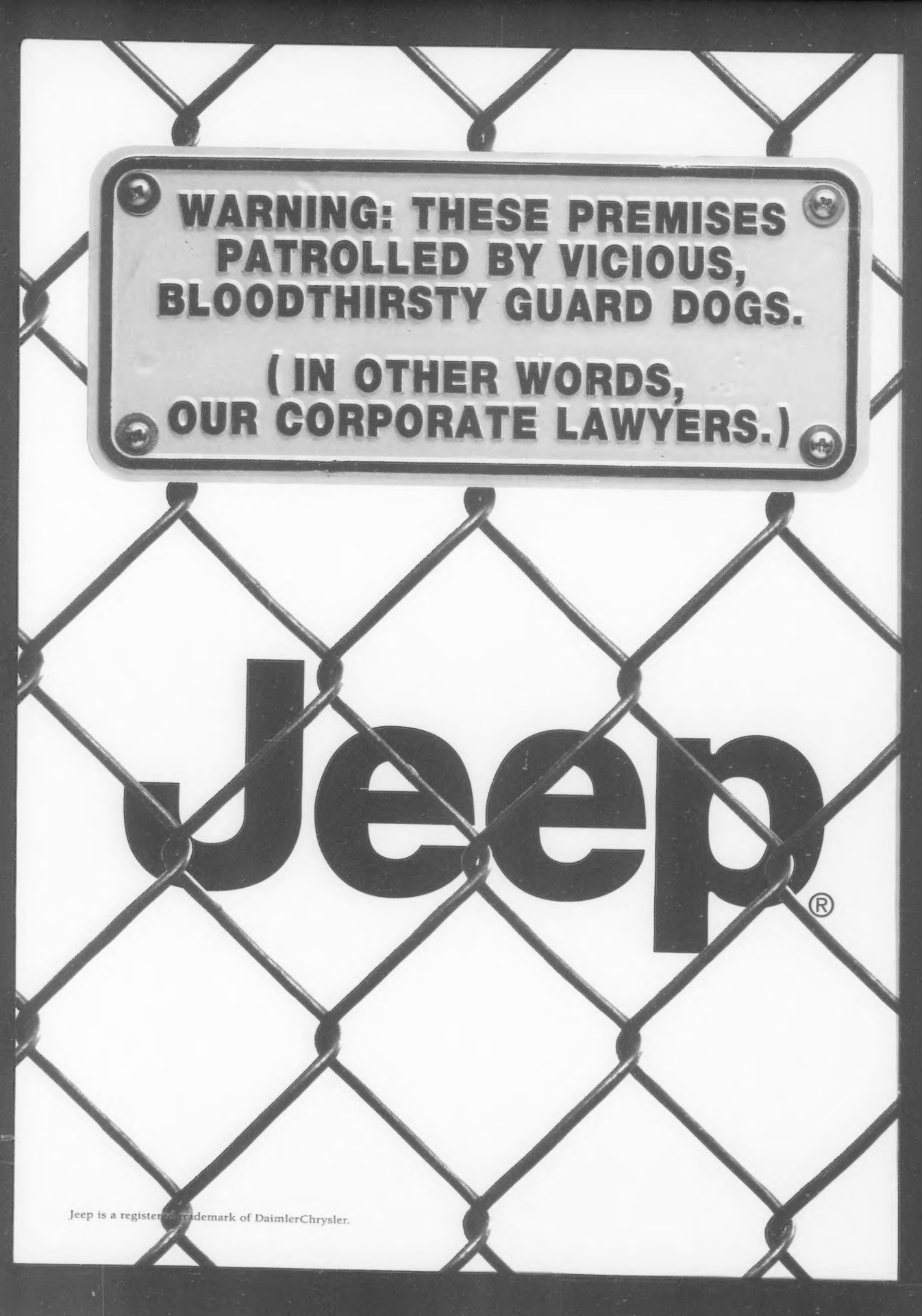
## Reporter hired by newspaper

The Door County Advocate (Sturgeon Bay, Wis.) 7/23/99

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